

**Canada's Foreign Policy towards Cuba under the Harper Administration:
Continuity or Change?**

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By

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Abstract

Canada's Cuba policy has been an important aspect of Canadian foreign policy in the last five decades. Generally, during that period Canada's Cuba policy has been different from the US policy. Canada's approach has been to engage with the island through bilateral relations instead of isolation and pressures. This Canadian strategy of engagement towards Cuba had its heyday during the Chrétien administration in the 1990s through the so-called policy of "constructive engagement". The goal of this approach was to promote democratic change in Cuba's political system using cooperation instead of isolation.

Nonetheless, under Harper the orientation of Canadian foreign policy in general, and consequently of Canada's Cuba policy have evolved towards a different path. Under the Conservatives, Canada has attempted to improve its overall relations with the US through closer cooperation in the political and defense contexts at the international level, and to avoid frictions on conflicting issues that could affect the relationship. The main purpose of this shift is to secure the cardinal interests of the Canadian economic elite with its southern neighbor.

Harper's Cuba policy is in keeping with his general foreign policy orientation: to refrain from pursuing any initiative that implies even a minimal confrontation with Washington. Besides, Cuba's "constructive engagement" belongs more to the so-called middle power approach or Liberal internationalist model of Canadian foreign policy, where Ottawa preferred to follow a more diplomatic strategy at the international stage. The Harper administration is involved in shifting that paradigm, and is not particularly interested in constructive engagement even though the policy has not been abandoned officially.

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Dedication

To my parents for their unconditional support and infinite love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, Cuba has had a unique place in Canadian foreign policy. Historically, the Canadian position towards the island has been different from that of the United States (US). Whereas the American strategy has been to isolate Havana from the rest of the hemisphere through the aggressive enforcement of an economic blockade, Canada's approach has been to engage with the island through bilateral relations, though there were oscillations in the relationship during the last five decades.

The Canadian strategy towards Cuba, which has been labelled as “constructive engagement” by many scholars¹, had its heyday during the Chrétien administration in the 1990s. The goal of this approach was to promote democratic change in Cuba's political system using cooperation instead of isolation and pressure. Lana Wylie suggests that “constructive engagement” entails a linkage between cooperation and influence:

While engagement implies regular relations (trade, investment, diplomatic exchanges), “constructive engagement” aims to utilize these mechanisms in order to achieve change within Cuba's domestic sphere. The goal of constructive engagement is to use the access that comes from regular relations to influence the development of a western style economic and political model on the island ... constructive engagement aspires to do this through fostering connections with Cubans and quietly encouraging the hoped-for changes.²

However, under the government of Stephen Harper, there is evidence of a policy shift from “constructive engagement” to a more critical stance towards the island, which is more in line with the standard US strategy of isolation.³ Furthermore, Harper's Cuba policy is in

¹ See Peter McKenna AND John M. Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice: Canada, Cuba and Fifty Years of 'Normal' Relations,” in *Canada Looks South: In Search of an Americas Policy*, ed. Peter McKenna (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), “The Chrétien years: Evaluating ‘constructive engagement,’” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 16 (2010), “Stephen Harper's Cuba Policy: from Autonomy to Americanization?” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 15.1 (2009); Lana Wylie, “Introduction: Shifting ground: Considering the new realities in the Canadian-Cuban relationship,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 16 (2010), “Perceptions and foreign policy: A comparative study of Canadian and American policy toward Cuba,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 11 (2004), “The Special Case of Cuba,” *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 67.3 (2012); Paolo Spadoni and Julie Sagebien, “Will They Still Love Us Tomorrow? Canada-Cuba Business Relations and the End of the US Embargo,” *Thunderbird International Business Review* 55.1 (2013).

² Lana Wylie, “Introduction: Shifting ground: Considering the new realities in the Canadian-Cuban relationship,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 16 (2010): 58.

³ In her work, Kalowatie Deonandan also challenged the constructive engagement thesis and noted that there was convergence between the Canadian and US policies towards Cuba even under the Chretien administration when the Canadian government was challenging the US on the Helms-Burton legislation. See Kalowatie Deonandan, “The Helms Burton Bill and Canada's Cuba Policy Convergences with the US”, *Policy and Society* 24.1 (2005).

keeping with his general foreign policy orientation: to refrain from pursuing any initiative that either involves or even implies even a minimal confrontation with Washington. In recent years, leading figures in the government and the Prime Minister himself have expressed open criticism of Cuba that has been similar in tone to the American criticism.

1.1 Research Objectives

The main purpose of the thesis is to investigate the nature of Canada's foreign policy toward Cuba under the Conservative government headed by Stephen Harper. In particular, the thesis will examine to what extent the Harper government's policy toward Cuba represents a radical turning point from the approach of "constructive engagement" that was ostensibly implemented by previous Canadian governments.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The investigation will be guided by a theoretical framework based on Mark Neufeld's hegemonic thesis,⁴ which borrows from Cranford Pratt's dominant class theory⁵ and from the neo-Gramscian approach used by Robert Cox⁶ to explain international relations. Pratt argues that Canada's foreign policy is determined by the interests of its dominant classes while Neufeld draws attention to the global hegemonic order which involves not just the "dominance of one state by other, but rather the institution and maintenance of a world order that serves the interests of the dominant class of the dominant state," and "the dominant classes of other states as well" in the system.⁷

The thesis argues that Canada's foreign policy has been supportive of US hegemonic interests though Canada is able to exercise some degree of independence insofar as this does not impinge on the strategic or economic interests of the hegemon.

1.3 Importance of the Thesis

During the nineties and the first decade of the 2000s the relations between Canada and Cuba generated the publication of numerous academic articles, books and papers in Canada. Today the intellectual production on this topic has decreased significantly. Thus, one of the

⁴ Mark Neufeld, "Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis: The Case of Canada as a Middle Power", in *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas* 1st edition, eds. Duane Bratt and Christopher J. Kukuha (Oxford University Press, 2007), 94-112.

⁵ Cranford Pratt, "Dominant Class Theory and Canadian Foreign Policy: The Case of the Counter-Consensus", *International Journal* 39 (1983): 99-135.

⁶ Cox, "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method" in *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, ed. Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

⁷ Neufeld, "Hegemony and Foreign Policy," 96.

purposes of the thesis is to add to that body of literature and update some topics covered in the existing studies. As the researcher is a scholar of Cuban origin studying in Canada, the thesis incorporates a Cuban perspective from the position of someone living in a Canadian academic environment.

1.4 Methodology

The thesis employs qualitative and quantitative sources. The bulk of the information is derived from secondary qualitative sources obtained from books, journals, newspaper articles, as well as digital sources, and also from primary sources such as government documents. The quantitative sources are related mainly to the statistical analysis of bilateral economic relations. Although most of the information is from Canadian and American sources some is from Cuban sources.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into six chapters as follows: Chapter one is the present chapter which is the Introduction. It lays out the argument of the thesis, the rationale for the study, the theoretical framework which guides it and the general organization of the work.

Chapter two is the theoretical chapter. It first discusses the traditional approaches through which the Canadian foreign policy has been studied historically. It then moves to the critical perspectives that challenges the standard middle power model by drawing on more radical critiques.

Chapter three addresses the evolution of Canadian foreign policy under the Harper administration, the institutional patterns that affect it and the unavoidable impact of the US-Canada relations on Ottawa's foreign policy. In other words, it lays out the close ties between Ottawa and Washington and the impact this has over Canadian foreign policy, and which will help to inform our understanding of the Conservatives policy towards Havana.

Chapter four presents an overview of Canadian-Cuban relations since the 1960s under different Canadian administrations and links these to the "constructive engagement" argument. Chapter five is the core chapter of the thesis and it deals with the analysis of Canada's Cuban policy under the Harper government. It assesses the Conservative administration stance towards Havana and argues that this relationship does not fit with the "constructive engagement" framework.

The final chapter is the conclusion. This chapter summarizes the thesis' findings and summarizes the thesis' main arguments.

CHAPTER 2:

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY

In the study of Canadian foreign policy at least three dominant theoretical approaches can be identified: the middle power thesis, the principal power argument, and the satellite/dependent power framework.⁸ The middle power thesis is usually associated with the liberal internationalist paradigm and which has been the dominant approach in the analysis of Canadian foreign policy.⁹ This approach emerged after the Second World War and it conceives of Canada as a middle power playing a constructive and pacifistic role on the international stage. According to Erica Simpson, the role of a middle power implies that:

Canada should seek every opportunity to mediate conflict in order to secure international peace ... Canada should support international institutions and consistently act in order to promote internationalism and collective security ... Canada should employ flexibility and quiet diplomacy in its interactions with other nations.¹⁰

Historically, liberal internationalism is considered to have had its golden age during the 1950's and the 1960's. Its roots can be traced to the period of Lester Pearson's administration and particularly Pearson's role at the United Nations during the Korean crisis in which he initiated the idea of a peacekeeping force, and for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize. Pearson's actions won Canada accolades and initiated a burgeoning literature on Canada's role as the international fixer—the liberal internationalist.

It started to change during the Trudeau years (1968-84) and was eclipsed by the end of 1980's.¹¹ It was at this time that a new paradigm of Canadian foreign policy began to take

⁸ Maureen Appel Molot, "Where do We, Should We, or Can We Sit?" in *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas* (First Edition), eds. Bratt Duane and Christopher J. Kukucha (Oxford University Press, 2007), 62.

⁹ One of the first proponents of Liberal Internationalism was John W. Holmes. See John Holmes, *The Shaping of Peace: Canada and the Search for World Order, 1943-1957*, vols. I and II (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982). More contemporary scholars associated with the liberal internationalist school include, Denis Stairs, *The Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) and Andrew F. Cooper, Richard A. Higgot and Kim Richard Nossal, *Relocating Middle Powers: Australia and Canada in a Changing World Order* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993)

¹⁰ Erika Simpson, "The Principles of Liberal Internationalism According to Lester Pearson", *Journal of Canadian Studies* 34 (1) (1999): 85.

¹¹ The domination of liberal-international views is inadequate to explain the new trends that have emerged in Canadian foreign policy and has given way, in the Trudeau era, to a neo-realist approach. See David B. Dewitt, and

shape—that of Canada as a principal power. It drew its analytical claims from the arguments of neorealists in international relations theory. Briefly stated, neorealists accept that the structure of the global order constrains or shapes states behavior.¹² The original proponent of this approach was James Eayrs,¹³ but David B. Dewitt and John J. Kirton¹⁴ have been the primary drivers of this concept in the last decades. The vision of Canada as a principal power lies in its relative rise when compared to a declining American hegemon¹⁵ and the capabilities derived from having abundant natural resources, high levels of technology, high standard of living and membership in exclusive international groups and organizations. The theorists of this concept argue that Canada can pursue its own policies in the international system with relatively little interference.¹⁶

An alternative paradigm for Canadian foreign policy is the peripheral-dependent/satellite approach, which according to Molot is based in the economic structuralist perspective.¹⁷ Representatives of this school, which emerged in the 1960s, are more heterogeneous in their viewpoints than middle and principal power proponents. This literature focuses on the economic structure, particularly in foreign direct investment in Canada, rather than political, military and diplomatic aspects. There are two streams within this group, one that sees Canada as a dependent state based on its export, foreign investment and technological

John J. Kirton, *Canada as a principal power: a study in foreign policy and international relations* (Toronto: Wiley, c1983)

¹² Neorealism's leading proponent is Kenneth Waltz. See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley 1979).

¹³ James Eayrs, "Defining a new place for Canada in the Hierarchy of World Powers", *International Perspectives*, (May-June 1975).

¹⁴ David B. Dewitt, and John J. Kirton, *Canada as a principal power: a study in foreign policy and international relations* (Toronto: Wiley, c1983); John J. Kirton, "Canada as a G8 Principal Power", in *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas* 1st edition,, eds. Duane Bratt and Christopher J. Kukucha (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2007) and John J. Kirton, "Canada as a G8 and G20 Principal Power," in *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas* (Second Edition), eds., Bratt Duane and Christopher J. Kukucha (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2011)

¹⁵ Among the Canadian authors who support this idea appear the above mentioned David B. Dewitt and John J. Kirton, and Lasha Tchamouridzé, "The unipolar world: Theory, images, and Canada's foreign policy priorities," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18.1 (2012). Among the non-Canadian scholars, there is the well-known Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, New York: Vintage Books, 1987, and Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009.

¹⁶ Duane Bratt and Christopher J. Kukucha, "Studying Canadian Foreign Policy: Varying Approaches" in *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas* (Second Edition), eds., Duane Bratt and Christopher J. Kukucha (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4.

¹⁷ Molot, "Where do We, Should We, or Can We Sit?"66.

structure, and other that considers Canada as an imperialist “secondary” power on its own that exports and utilizes capital in advancing its own economic and political interests abroad.¹⁸

In addition to the above theories, in recent decades other non-traditional models have emerged with the intent of giving a more comprehensive explanation of Canadian foreign policy that combines both the domestic interests in Canada with its international pursuits. One of these is the dominant class theory put forward by Cranford Pratt.¹⁹ This approach offers a general theory of the determinants of Canadian policies toward the less developed countries and shows the limits imposed on Canadian foreign policy by the imperatives of the global capitalist system and the interests of the dominant class in Canada.²⁰

However, among the diverse theoretical approaches intending to explain Canadian foreign policy, the most convincing in my opinion, is the one advanced by Mark Neufeld,²¹ who also borrows from Cranford Pratt and Robert Cox. Neufeld praises Pratt's dominant class theory approach, but at the same time sees its limitations. He argues that it is “limited to being a theory of 'foreign policy', that leaves largely unanswered the question of how its emphasis on class society at the domestic level relates to the larger global context.”²² Furthermore, as a derivative

¹⁸ Molot, “Where do We, Should We, or Can We Sit?” 66-67. Among the representatives of the dependency stream are Harold Innis, “Economic Trends in Canadian-American Relations” in *Essays in Canadian Economic History*, ed., Mary Q. Innis, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956); Kari Levitt, *Silent Surrender: The Multinational Corporation in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970); Wallace Clemens, *Continental Corporate Power* (Toronto: McClellan and Stewart, 1977); Daniel Drache, “The Crisis of Canadian Political Economy: Dependency Theory vs. the New Orthodoxy”, *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 7 (3) 1983; and Michael Claw, “Canadian Political Economy and the International Underdevelopment and Dependency Debate”, *Canadian Political Science Association papers*, (Ottawa 1982). The major proponents of the imperialist perspective are Steve More and Debi Wells, *Imperialism and the National Question in Canada* (Toronto: Moore, 1975) and Jorge Niosi, *Les multinationales canadiennes*, (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1985). More recent works in are Todd Gordon, *Imperialist Canada* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Pub., 2010); and Greg Albo, “Empire’s Ally: Canadian Foreign Policy,” *The Bulletin* 37 (2006), <http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/bullet037.html>, accessed March 4, 2014, and also Greg Albo, “The “New Economy” and Capitalism Today,” in *Interrogating the New Economy: Restructuring Work in the 21st Century*, ed. Norene Pupo and Mark P. Thomas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010)

¹⁹ Pratt, “Dominant Class,” 99-135.

²⁰ Robert O. Matthews, “A Tribute to Cranford Pratt.” *International Journal* 57 (2002): 171. According to Greg Albo, who quotes several authors as Frank Park and Libby Park, John Porter, Wallace Clement and Denis Olsen, and particularly William Carroll, the composition of dominant class today in Canada is based on financial capital. “Canadian capital has reorganized and internationalized, with financial capital, particularly Canadian banks, at the centre of dominant industrial- financial groups (...) this domestically owned form of ‘finance capital’ has come to dominate the Canadian ruling bloc and is the critical underpinning of the hegemony of neoliberal policies in Canada.” See Greg Albo, “Neoliberalism and Canada’s Ruling Class,” *Monthly Review* (2007), accessed March 3, 2014, mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2007/albo070407.html.

²¹ Neufeld, “Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis,” 94-112.

²² Neufeld, “Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis,” 96.

of a structuralist theory, he argues that the dominant class approach overemphasizes the determining structures and neglects human agency.²³

Neufeldt proposes the use of the Gramscian concept of “hegemony” instead as it was developed by Robert Cox in his analysis of international relations to study Canadian foreign policy.²⁴ The concept of hegemony assumes a world capitalist economy in which class relations is the main variable. According to Neufeld, hegemony “is understood to involve not dominance of one state by other, but rather the institution and maintenance of a world order that serves the interests of the dominant class of the dominant state while at the same time serves the interests of the dominant classes of other states as well.”²⁵ “[H]egemony is not limited to the level of international order...[It] has its parallel in the hegemony at the domestic level, where dominant classes make real concessions (always within limits) to subordinate classes to achieve broad societal consent for their leadership.”²⁶

Following this logic, Neufeld suggests that Canada became a “core state” of the system in the context of an “American led-hegemonic order.” It has enjoyed benefits in its association with American efforts toward liberalization in trade and investment regimes and concessions at the domestic level were made to “subaltern classes” (through the welfare system for example) to provide a “stable basis for capitalist class hegemony” in Canadian society.²⁷

Neufeld analyzes critically the “middle power” concept that is at the core of the liberal internationalist paradigm. He explains that the concept was presented as a model of Canada's behavior in the world that served the hegemony of the dominant class, both internally and abroad. It also created “an environment conducive to economic growth” and on it was based “the compromise of the liberal welfare state”, the “cornerstone of the hegemony”.²⁸ The image of Canada as an internationally “responsible” country was crucial in creating an internal consensus to “support the extensive involvement in the maintenance of the global order.”²⁹ In this context, Canada played a “supportive” role of the hegemonic global order in two ways: the first was as “facilitator and mediator” that “helped to defuse potential conflicts” that could

²³ Neufeld, “Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis,” 96.

²⁴ Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” 49-66.

²⁵ Neufeld, “Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis,” 97.

²⁶ Neufeld, “Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis,” 98.

²⁷ Neufeld, “Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis,” 99.

²⁸ Neufeld, “Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis,” 99.

²⁹ Neufeld, “Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis,” 99.

undermine the “stability of the global order”; the second was as a state “sacrificing” its national interests in order to show that the global order was not only “American” but that it also represented the “common interest.”³⁰

The theoretical approach of Cox and Neufeld is an excellent starting point to explore some ideas about the current situation of the international capitalist system and the character of the relations between the hegemon and its allies. These considerations may help to clarify the position of Canada within the international system and the role it performs.

For instance, in his most recent book *Imperialist Canada*, the Canadian scholar Todd Gordon criticizes those who think that Canada “does not have imperialist interests of its own”, and states that it “has a fairly global reach and does project power.”³¹ He also stresses that the capacity of countries of the North “to drain the wealth and resources from the South, suggests that imperialism is not the preserve of a single superpower.”³² Canada is classified as a “sub-superpower” according to its “size and relative influence in the world” and has its “own independent capitalist interest” in exploiting the South. Gordon recognizes that Canada is integrated to some degree with US capital, but also pursues its interests bilaterally (trade and investment agreements) and through multilateral institutions.³³

Sub-superpowers have their own regional niche where they concentrate their influence.³⁴ Gordon explains that sub-superpowers play a supportive role for the superpower when is necessary in multilateral organizations and in US-led military adventures. In this context, Canada offers a cover for US actions due to its better world image.³⁵ This idea is similar to the one advanced by the Argentinean economist and theorist Claudio Katz who wrote:

This domination is not exercised by a mysterious ‘world power’ but through means of the military and diplomatic actions of each power in its main areas of influence. The role of the US is more prominent in ‘Plan Colombia’ than in the Balkans conflict and the task of Europe is better defined in the Mediterranean crisis than in the development of the FTAA. This specificity relates to interests that each imperialist group channels in the geopolitical actions led by its states, something the theoreticians of Empire do not perceive.³⁶

³⁰ Neufeld, “Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis,” 99.

³¹ Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, 55.

³² Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, 55.

³³ Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, 56.

³⁴ Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, 56.

³⁵ Gordon, *Imperialist Canada*, 57-58.

³⁶ Claudio Katz, “Imperialism in the 21st century,” International Viewpoint, 15 November (2002), , <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article329>, accessed March 4, 2014 To this argument should be added that even though the US interests do not have the same salience in all the areas, its presence is evident everywhere because it has the prerogatives of a superpower.

Some critics of Gordon's views have pointed out that "Canada is both dependent and imperialist" and that NAFTA "has not only increased Canadian dependency on the American market but has sped up the rationalisation of the continental marketplace with the terms largely set south of the border."³⁷ Besides, "the role of Canada as a junior partner beside the US in the effort to control Haiti, Afghanistan, Iraq and the rest of the Middle East testify to growing dependence and integration."³⁸ It is also noted that Gordon does not provide a single example, in which Canada has independently projected its military and political power globally in a way independent of that of the United States.³⁹

Leo Panitch argues (referring to Europe, but that is applicable to other advanced capitalist countries) that capitalist powers pursue their own projects to obtain "more room for themselves economically, militarily and in the intelligence field" to increase their status within the American empire, but not to challenge it.⁴⁰ In this regard, Katz suggests that today "rivalry, integration and hegemony" combine in a "more complex" way than in the past,⁴¹ while Albo states that in the context of internationalization of capital "the relations of cooperation and competitiveness between the advanced capitalist countries became redefined."⁴²

According to Katz globalization implies more levels of "association between internationalized capital", but "there is no indication of a complete globalization of the ruling class."⁴³ In other words, there are not "supranational state agencies matching the transnationalisation of the capitalist market."⁴⁴ Thus, the ruling classes "act through distinct governments, institutions and states, defending ... their specific interests."⁴⁵

However, Robert Cox, using a Gramscian interpretation, posits that while "great powers have relative freedom to determine their foreign policies in response to domestic interests,

³⁷ Henry Heller, "Imperialist Canada," review of *Imperialist Canada*, by Todd Gordon, *Historical Materialism* 20.2 (2012): 229.

³⁸ Heller, "Imperialist Canada," 229.

³⁹ Heller, "Imperialist Canada," 230.

⁴⁰ Peter Gowan, Leo Panitch and Martin Shaw, "The State, Globalisation and the New Imperialism: A Roundtable Discussion," *Historical Materialism*, 9 (2001), 17.

⁴¹ Katz, "Imperialism in the 21st century,"

⁴² Albo, "Empire's Ally," 2.

⁴³ Katz, "Imperialism in the 21st century,"

⁴⁴ Gowan, Panitch and Shaw, "The State, Globalisation and the New Imperialism," 11.

⁴⁵ Katz, "Imperialism in the 21st century,"

smaller powers have less autonomy.”⁴⁶ This idea serves to illustrate the asymmetric relationship between the US (the dominant power within the hegemonic system) and Canada (a subaltern core country). This argument also refutes the thesis of the “independent” nature of Canada as an imperialist power, as Albo and Gordon posit. In the context of a world hegemony the dominant class of a subaltern power may enjoy some relative autonomy but not complete independence because it is part of “a complex of international social relations which connect the social classes of the different countries.”⁴⁷ And, of course, those relations functions “according to a hierarchy of powers within the inter-state structure of hegemony”, the leading state consults first and seeks the support of second-rank core states.⁴⁸ As Cox noted: “The economic life of subordinate nations is penetrated by and intertwined with that of powerful nations”.⁴⁹ This idea reflects the dialectic link between interdependence and subordination existing between the dominant center and its allies. This abstraction is translated in a very graphic way in the particular context of US-Canada relations by Panitch who observes that:

Canadians who work in the Canadian Defense Department – and I would add in the Canadian Finance Department – who walk the streets of Ottawa but have a degree of influence on American foreign policy and economic policy, are semi-citizens of the American empire. It’s a type of empire which has penetrated other sovereign nation-states, and which, in turn, does indeed include them in decision making – albeit not as equals.⁵⁰

In sum, although the middle power approach is still the predominant prism through which many interpret Canadian foreign policy, alternative approaches offer more nuanced and deeper insights into Canada’s overseas behavior. Some of these alternative approaches were explored in the preceding pages.

It is argued here that the framework that best explains today's Canada foreign policy and consequently the evolution of the policy towards Cuba is the one proposed by Neufeld. The virtue of this approach is that it reflects the substance of the Canadian foreign policy beyond

⁴⁶ Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” 59.

⁴⁷ Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” 62.

⁴⁸ Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” 63.

⁴⁹ Cox, “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations,” 59.

⁵⁰ Gowan, Panitch and Shaw, “The State, Globalisation and the New Imperialism,” 16-17.

the debatable validity of traditional myths or models. The essence of it is that Canadian dominant class is well entrenched in a hegemonic international capitalist system, from which it obtains benefits. Therefore, there is common shared interest in the maintenance of that system, which prevails over any other differences between members of that class. In this context, the role of human agency should not be overlooked. Even though, the hegemonic system sets the role and the limits of a capitalist country within it according to its relative power, there is some space for human agency. As this case study shows, the actions, ideology and political preferences of relevant politicians, in particular of prime ministers or foreign ministers, can influence the course of Canadian foreign policy within the boundaries of the hegemonic system, especially if the strategic and economic imperatives of the hegemon are not trespassed.

It is within these limits determined by the hegemon (i.e., the US) that Canada's "constructive engagement" with Cuba can be understood. That is, Canada's approach to "engaging" with Havana, in the wake of the US blockade, did not threaten US hegemony or its economic or strategic interests. However, this engagement allowed Ottawa some semblance of foreign policy independence and responded to the demands of Canada's dominant class interests.

CHAPTER 3:

CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE HARPER GOVERNMENT

Since the Conservative administration of Stephen Harper took office in 2006, Canada's foreign policy strategies have received growing criticisms from amongst academics and other observers. They have suggested that while Ottawa reiterates that the defining values driving Canada's overseas actions are rooted in respect for "freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law," Harper's actions actually represent a repudiation of these values which have been pursued by previous governments.⁵¹ The goal of this chapter is to analyze the main aspects in the evolution of Canadian foreign policy under Harper's regime. To do this, the chapter is divided into two parts.

The first part deals with some domestic aspects that influence Canada's foreign policy. The analysis will focus on institutional elements that are combined with the particular agency of the prime minister and his party (i.e., ideology, world vision and political preferences), to explain the shift that happened from 2006 to the present. The section will also show the weakening of civil society organizations that used to have more participation in Canadian foreign policy in previous decades. The second part will discuss the strategic relationship between Canada and the US under the Harper Administration particularly through the security and economic axes, and the motivations behind the search for a closer alliance with Washington. This section also focuses on the prominence that trade and economic issues have reached in the design of Ottawa's current foreign policy in order to demonstrate why the Harper administration no longer views Cuba as an important element in Canada's foreign policy design.

3.1 Domestic Factors Influencing Canadian Foreign Policy

3.1.1 Institutional Aspects, Ideological Trends, and Agency

Canadian foreign policy is determined by a combination of institutional arrangements, ideological orientation, human agency and the interaction of these with various domestic actors. In this context, a primary role is accorded to the Prime Minister, as the head of government. According to Gecelovsky, the powers of the Canadian Prime Minister in conducting foreign policy are such that "may override the interests" of other actors and allow that person to "pursue

⁵¹ John Kirton, "Vulnerable America, capable Canada: Convergent leadership for an interconnected world," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18.1 (2012): 137.

the foreign policy of his/her liking.”⁵² Even though there are some constraints to the executive competencies of the prime minister, including the preferences, of other state and social actors, “the constraints are only constraints if the prime minister allows them to stop him/her from acting.”⁵³ The Prime Minister “establishes the parameters within which the foreign minister operates” and is “able to change the content and direction of Canada’s policy at his/her discretion without consultation”.⁵⁴

In the last decades, there was a trend towards the centralization of Canadian foreign policy under the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO).⁵⁵ This move started with Trudeau and was continued by successive prime ministers. Under the Conservative government this tendency has accelerated. Harper’s administration “has sought to control fully within the PMO not only decision-making but also communicating the results of those decisions to the Canadian public” in what has been called “Harper’s government ‘obsessive control of information.’”⁵⁶ Some authors have noted that the prime minister does not like to consult many advisors and delegates little to other members of his cabinet.⁵⁷

According to some analysts, the current Canadian prime minister, has a Manichaeian view of the world where there is only “good and bad, right and wrong.”⁵⁸ At the international level, this is reflected in the fact that Harper privileges bilateral relations with “key” countries like the US and “those multilateral forums where [Canada] can make economic gains” (i.e. Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement and the Pacific Alliance). Conversely, he is doubtful about the usefulness of the UN, the Commonwealth and Francophonie, which are deemed as “multilateral talking-shop forums.”⁵⁹

Ideologically, the Conservative Party, which Stephen Harper leads, shares many ideological similarities with the Republican Party in the US,⁶⁰ and on the international stage,

⁵² Paul Gecelovsky, “Of Legacies and Lightning Bolts Revisited: Another Look at the Prime Minister and Canadian Foreign Policy,” in *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas*, ed. Duane Bratt and Christopher J. Kukucha (Don Mills, Ont: OUP Canada, 2011), 217.

⁵³ Gecelovsky, “Of Legacies and Lightning Bolts Revisited,” 217.

⁵⁴ Gecelovsky, “Of Legacies and Lightning Bolts Revisited,” 218.

⁵⁵ Gecelovsky, “Of Legacies and Lightning Bolts Revisited,” 220.

⁵⁶ Gecelovsky, “Of Legacies and Lightning Bolts Revisited,” 221.

⁵⁷ Michael D. Behiels, “Stephen Harper’s Rise to Power: Will His ‘New’ Conservative Party Become Canada’s ‘Natural Governing Party’ of the Twenty-First Century?” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40.1 (2010): 133.

⁵⁸ Colin Robertson, “Stephen Harper’s World View,” *iPolitics*, December 15, 2013, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.ipolitics.ca/author/robcolin/>

⁵⁹ Robertson, “Stephen Harper’s world view,”

⁶⁰ Behiels, “Stephen Harper’s Rise to Power,” 124.

tends to echo and reflect many of the latter's preferences. Harper's Conservatives, like the Republicans in the US, are strong advocates of "economic conservatism", that is, of "less government intervention in the economy — lower taxes, less regulation — and a more restrictive interpretation on the application of federal powers than previous governments."⁶¹ In other words, their policy preferences reflect a very clear neoliberal approach that tends to undermine the traditional Canadian welfare system to benefit the entrepreneurial elite. The Conservative Party is focused on the advancement and defense – domestically and abroad - of the economic interests of the dominant class, especially those of western Canada and particularly those of the oil and gas producers in Alberta.⁶²

Given the ample room for maneuvering that a Canadian Prime Minister has in steering the country's foreign policy, it can be said that Canada's current international stance owes a lot to Harper's ideological and personal preferences. Indeed, this policy direction is only limited by the restrictions that are imposed by the dynamics of the international capitalist system and by Canada's objective limitations as a country. This flexibility is permitted to the extent that Canadian foreign policy responds to and reflects the main international interests of Canada's dominant classes. Indeed, one of the central concerns of Canada's economic elite is the deepening of its strategic links with the US, which will be analyzed later in this chapter.

3.1.2 Harper's Foreign Policy and the Weakening of Civil Society

The relative easiness with which Harper's Conservative course in Canadian foreign policy has been implemented in recent years is also related to the current internal balance between right-leaning and progressive forces within the Canadian society. This process is closely linked to the application of neoliberal policies during the last two decades, which have weakened the labour organizations and social movements to a considerable extent.⁶³ Neoliberal trends are more powerful today than in the past and are better organized. As Albo states "neoliberalism [has been] consolidated as the matrix of governmental policy, whatever the political party in power and level of government."⁶⁴ Within this framework, the so-called

⁶¹ Robertson, "Stephen Harper's world view,"

⁶² Behiels, "Stephen Harper's Rise to Power," 124.

⁶³ For a detailed analysis of the transformations occurred in Canadian society and in the labour and social movements after the introduction of neoliberal policies, see Jeff Noonan, "The Historical and Contemporary Life-Value of the Canadian Labour Movement," *Labour/Le Travail* 71 (2013): 9-28; and Albo, "The 'New Economy' and Capitalism Today,"

⁶⁴ Albo, "Neoliberalism and Canada's Ruling Class,"

“counter-consensus,” as Cranford Pratt labelled those progressive groups of the earlier decades that fought for a more progressive Canadian foreign policy stance,⁶⁵ have been significantly diluted and some of their leaders and organizations co-opted.⁶⁶ Further, progressive social movements have become very “diverse” and have “few core points of convergence,”⁶⁷ and this has also served to weaken them as a coherent force.

In pursuit of its neoliberal agenda, the Conservatives under Stephen Harper, have chosen a “confrontational relationship with much of the NGO community” that had previously enjoyed a tradition of some participation and influence in some aspects of Canadian foreign policy.⁶⁸ The current government has targeted many manifestations of “critical thinking”, silencing “voices of dissent, defunding advocacy groups, and undermining the ability of independent organizations to confront the policies of Harper.”⁶⁹ Amongst the progressive organizations that have been defunded by the government are the International Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, KAIROS (a collection of churches and religious organizations) and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation that represents over 100 NGOs concerned with development assistance.⁷⁰ To further weaken the progressive sector, the government through the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) now targets many of them, such as progressive think tanks, environmental groups, and international aid and social justice organizations, for financial audits.⁷¹ All this constitutes a further example of the fading of progressive alternatives within civil society. In addition, the demise of the Canadian International Development Agency

⁶⁵ Pratt, “Dominant Class Theory pp. 117-118.

⁶⁶ Neufeld explains how the dominant class through *transformismo* (the cooptation of the potential leaders of subaltern social groups by adjusting dangerous ideas to the dominant discourse) has successfully co-opted the less radical representatives of the counter consensus. In foreign policy it expresses in the involvement of some segments of these groups in the “democracy promotion” goal within the civil society of the global South. See Mark Neufeld, “Democratization in/of Foreign Policy: Critical Reflections on the Canadian Case,” in *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas*, ed. Duane Bratt and Christopher J. Kukucha (Don Mills, Ont: OUP Canada, 2011)

⁶⁷ Greg Albo, “Canada: Challenging Stephen Harper’s Imperialist Agenda,” *Global Research*, November 13, 2013, accessed October 12, 2014, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/canada-challenging-stephen-harpers-imperialist-agenda/5358559>

⁶⁸ Adam Chapnick, “Diplomatic Counter-Revolution: Conservative Foreign Policy, 2006-11,” *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 67 (2011): 149.

⁶⁹ “Harper’s Drive to Demolish Dissent,” *Canadian Dimension*, April 26, 2011, accessed November 15, 2014, <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/harpers-drive-to-demolish-dissent>

⁷⁰ Chapnick, “Diplomatic Counter-Revolution,” 149.

⁷¹ “CRA audits CCPA think-tank due to alleged bias,” *CBC News*, September 02, 2014, accessed November 15, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/cra-audits-ccpa-think-tank-due-to-alleged-bias-1.2752966>.

(CIDA) through its merger within the former Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), and the subordination of its aid purposes to the promotion of Canadian business interests (specifically its mining interests) abroad can be seen as another chapter of that trend. Under these circumstances, the social resistance to the conservative course in Canadian foreign policy is considerably minimized.

3.2 *The Primacy of Canadian-US Relations*

The relationship with the US has always been an overwhelming fact in Canadian foreign policy. These relations are defined by a growing integration and interdependence⁷² and unquestionable asymmetry. In recent years, the main trends in Canadian-US links have been mainly shaped by the consequences of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in 2001 and the persistence of the capitalist crisis that started in 2008. While Canada-US relations are multidimensional, for the purposes of this research they will be analyzed only with reference to the security and economic aspects.

3.2.1 *The Security Dimension*

With respect to the issue of security, the Harper government came to power in 2006 with an electoral platform advocating a “more robust military to bolster Canada's international presence”, and this was very much in line with the policies of the Bush administration.⁷³ Once in office, Harper adopted measures that continued the “strategy of aligning with Washington on international security.”⁷⁴ Amongst his actions were the decisions to spend 1.4 billion to improve national security, the renewal of North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) agreement indefinitely, and boosting military spending in \$17 billion.⁷⁵

⁷² “Economics, however, is the key driver of this relationship. Canada's trade with the United States is equivalent to almost half of our GDP. The US represents roughly three-quarters of Canada's exports and over half of our imports. Canada, in return, represents 22.2 percent of America's exports and 16.5 percent of its imports. Canada is a larger market for US goods than all 27 countries of the European Union combined, which have more than 15 times the population of Canada.” Fen Osler Hampson, “Negotiating with Uncle Sam: Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose,” *International Journal* (2010): 306.

⁷³ Donald Barry, “Managing Canada-US Relations in the post-9/11 Era: Do We Need a Big Idea,” in *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas*, eds. Duane Bratt and Christopher J. Kukucha (Don Mills, Ont: OUP Canada, 2011), 140.

⁷⁴ Barry, “Managing Canada-US Relations in the post-9/11 Era,” 141.

⁷⁵ Barry, “Managing Canada-US Relations in the post-9/11 Era,” 141.

Consequently, the Canadian stance within NATO became more assertive and belligerent as a result of the evolution of this military agenda.⁷⁶

One of the more distinctive militaristic aspects of Canada's foreign policy under the Harper government has been the efforts and resources devoted to the Canadian military mission in Afghanistan. One of the priorities of the Conservative government was to extend and expand "Canada's mandate in Afghanistan", first until 2009 and later until 2011.⁷⁷ The real motivations behind this move, according to Bratt were "supporting the Canada-US relationship" and "rebuilding the Canadian military."⁷⁸ The Afghanistan decision was seen as a deliberate move to compensate the US for the refusal of the Chrétien and Martin governments to follow Washington in the Iraq mission and in the effort to advance the Ballistic Missile Defense initiative.⁷⁹

In addition, this participation "in an inherited war that Harper made his own" reflected the wishes of the new prime minister to identify "Canada as a global leader in the military realm".⁸⁰ It follows the "premise that Canada might be more than a mere middle power, even in the classically hard military realm."⁸¹ Although the deepening cooperation with the US started in the second half of the Chrétien administration conditioned by the global constraints and security needs that were imposed by the capitalist hegemonic system after the 9/11, under the Conservatives this collaboration was raised to a higher level. As Albo observes: "The Harper government inherited the Afghanistan mission but they have defined it as a centre-piece of their government, partly on its own terms and partly in embracing the American geo-political vision."⁸² In general, Albo continues, the Harper government pushed more vigorously than Chrétien and Martin governments in the direction of "more closely defining Canadian foreign policy interests as tied to U.S. security concerns and imperial agendas to ensure Canadian capitalists access to U.S. markets for their goods and capital."⁸³

⁷⁶ Albo, "Empire's Ally," 6.

⁷⁷ Duane Bratt, "Afghanistan: why did we go? Why did we stay? Will we leave?" in *Readings in Canadian Foreign Policy: Classic Debates and New Ideas*, ed. Duane Bratt and Christopher J. Kukucha (Don Mills, Ont: OUP Canada, 2011), 318. The Canadian military presence in Afghanistan concluded finally in 2014.

⁷⁸ Bratt, "Afghanistan: why did we go? 318.

⁷⁹ Bratt, "Afghanistan: why did we go? 318.

⁸⁰ Kirton, "Vulnerable America, capable Canada," 137.

⁸¹ Kirton, "Vulnerable America, capable Canada," 137.

⁸² Albo, "Empire's Ally," 7.

⁸³ Albo, "Empire's Ally," 5-6.

3.2.2 *The Economic Dimension*

Under Harper, Canada-US economic ties became even more intertwined. One of the most significant aspects of their relationship involves the issue of energy. In 2006, Harper advanced the concept of Canada as a superpower, which was based on the country's strengths in energy production amongst other resources. His goal was to present Canada as indispensable to the US in terms of the latter's energy needs to fill in the vulnerabilities of the US in this area and respond to the American priority of ensuring energy security.⁸⁴ At the same time, this also serves Canadian economic interests, especially those of the energy sector, which was seeking to ensure maintain and increase access to US markets.

The extraordinary importance of Canadian-US energy relations during the last decade, and particularly during Harper's administration is the result of the Canadian government's growing dependence on its revenues from energy and other resources, and this has "contributed to the substantial realignment of federal interests with those of major energy-producing provinces."⁸⁵ For this reason during the past decade "[m]aintaining US market access for a wide array of Canadian energy sources has been a central priority for Canadian Embassy officials in Washington."⁸⁶

In the few last years, the energy issues in Canadian-US relations have become very interlinked with environmental concerns as activists groups have gained momentum in their lobbying to protect the environment from harms inflicted by extractive industry development. This explains why the Harper government has aligned its position with that of the White House on both energy and environmental issues.⁸⁷ This effort became necessary because major environmental groups in the US have increasingly attacked the Canadian oils sands imports since 2006 for their high impact on greenhouse gas emissions.⁸⁸ The main concern of the Canadian government has been "to protect US market access for Canadian oil sands and other energy production while working closely with American negotiators in broader global climate negotiations,"⁸⁹ as explained below.

⁸⁴ Kirton, "Vulnerable America, capable Canada," 137.

⁸⁵ Geoffrey Hale, *So near yet so far: The public and hidden worlds of Canada-US relations* (UBC Press, 2012), 304.

⁸⁶ Hale, *So near yet so far*, 313.

⁸⁷ Hale, *So near yet so far*, 311.

⁸⁸ Hampson, "Negotiating with Uncle Sam," 309 and Hale, *So near yet so far*, 189.

⁸⁹ Hale, *So near yet so far*, 311-312.

The arrival of Obama to the White House added new challenges to the Canadian-US energy relations. The importance given by Obama to the environmental concerns and his government's proposal to cut greenhouse emissions "to 80 percent below the 1990 level by 2050", contrasted with "Canada's modest objective of lowering emissions by 50 percent from the 2006 level by 2050."⁹⁰ Also, "Obama's pledge to end US reliance on dirty (energy)" provoked the alarm of Canadian oil producers and consequently of the Conservative government that "had viewed Canada's role as the largest supplier of energy to the US as an important bargaining chip in any reassessment of NAFTA."⁹¹

Despite its lack of enthusiasm for the Obama's initiatives on climate change,⁹² the Conservative government acted quickly "to make common cause with Washington in a collective effort to enhance North American energy and environmental security."⁹³ In the last few years, Harper's government has tried to appease Obama's administration by proposing a bilateral climate change agreement to neutralize American concerns about energy security, while protecting Canadian oil exporters' interests.⁹⁴ However, the prolonged US delay in authorizing the Keystone XL pipeline⁹⁵ to cross the Canada-USA border in response to the pressures of environmental groups, was considered as a fact "without precedent" in the bilateral relations.⁹⁶ The US Congress approved the Keystone XL finally in February 2015, but President Obama vetoed it soon afterward.⁹⁷ Conservatives are no doubt hoping that the next American federal elections will bring changes that will better align with their preferences.

⁹⁰ Barry, "Managing Canada-US Relations in the post-9/11 Era," 144.

⁹¹ Barry, "Managing Canada-US Relations in the post-9/11 Era," 144.

⁹² Hale, *So near yet so far*, 311.

⁹³ Hampson, "Negotiating with Uncle Sam," 309.

⁹⁴ Barry, "Managing Canada-US Relations in the post-9/11 Era," 144.

⁹⁵ "The Keystone Pipeline System is an oil pipeline system in Canada and the United States. It runs from the Western Canadian Sedimentary Basin in Alberta, Canada, to refineries in the United States in Steele City, Nebraska, Wood River and Patoka, Illinois, and in the Gulf Coast of Texas. Three phases of the project are in operation and the fourth is awaiting U.S. government approval." "Keystone Pipeline," *Wikipedia*, accessed June 9, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keystone_Pipeline.

⁹⁶ Alexander Moens and Alex Bartos. *Canada's Catch-22: The State of Canada-US Relations in 2014*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: Fraser Institute, 2014), iii.

⁹⁷ Josh Lederman, "Defying GOP, Obama vetoes Keystone XL pipeline bill," *Yahoo News*, February 24, 2015, accessed February 25, <http://news.yahoo.com/congress-sends-keystone-bill-obama-plans-veto-140235568--finance.html>

The delay of this project for so many years "reinforced Ottawa's commitment to diversify Canada's energy exports outside North America."⁹⁸ However, some authors notice that "Canada's record for diversifying its trade from the US" has been "modest" over the last years.⁹⁹ At the end, "all governments made a rhetorical commitment to diversify Canada's foreign trade away from the American market" but "each prime minister has left the country more dependent on the US market than when he took office."¹⁰⁰ As Kirton explains, "the Canada–United States relationship defines Canadian foreign policy."

For some authors "Canadian foreign policy demonstrated more divergence from Washington's policies under the Liberals" when "the United States' position in the international system appeared to be both unparalleled and unchallenged", while under the Conservatives "it became less dissenting" from Washington when the US seemed to be in decline.¹⁰¹ This difference has been explained as due mainly by one factor: the emergence and increasing relevance of non-Western powers. Even though the US continues to be a "dominant military power" there is an emergence of other countries "reflecting a transformation in the distribution of economic power from the United States to emerging countries like Brazil, Russia, India, China (the BRICs), and others."¹⁰² The debacle of the World Trade Center led to a feeling of shared vulnerability among developed capitalist countries and the instinctive need to close ranks with the hegemon and the leading security guarantor. The emergence and growing salience of BRICS and the clear economic weaknesses of the main imperial center, instead of provoking defection among capitalist countries, have spurred a deeper subordination to Washington because what is at stake is the survival of the long established Western dominance over the international economics and politics. However, this does not preclude advanced capitalist countries, including Canada, from pursuing economic gains even with those rival "newcomers" as long as strategic hegemonic goals are not at stake. Like "constructive engagement" with Cuba, Canada is able to pursue foreign policy initiatives with the BRICS as long as these do not threaten the interests of the hegemon. In this context, as Hawes

⁹⁸ Hale, *So near yet so far*, 311-312.

⁹⁹ Moens and Bartos, *Canada's Catch-22*, iv.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Gecelovsky and Christopher Kukucha, "Much Ado about Parties: Conservative and Liberal Approaches to Canada's Trade Policy with the United States," *International Journal* 64.1 (2008): 40.

¹⁰¹ Lasha Tchamtouridzé, "The unipolar world: Theory, images, and Canada's foreign policy priorities," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18.1 (2012): 36.

¹⁰² Jeffrey Ayres and Laura Macdonald, "A community of fate? Non-polarity and North American security interdependence," *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18 (2012): 92.

and Kirkey explain, “systemic change [for example the rise of the BRICS] will, or should, have the curious effect of reinforcing the Canadian- American partnership.”¹⁰³

Canada’s growing ties with the BRICS highlights another important aspect of the change in Canadian foreign policy under Harper. According to the observers, while the Harper government initially seemed to have placed some emphasis on the principles of democracy, human rights, rule of law, etc., in its international dealings, it seemed to be paying less attention to these and turning increasingly towards a more open “economic diplomacy”.¹⁰⁴ One clear example is the evolution of the policy towards China. During the first four years of his administration, Harper was very critical of Beijing on human rights and democracy issues and he did not pay any official visit to the Asian country. However, “Mr. Harper reversed course in his China policy, under pressure from Canadian businesses who claimed the Conservative government’s principles were costing them contracts.”¹⁰⁵ In February 2012, Harper visited China finally and pushed for “stronger relations” with Beijing in his speeches and “buried the human rights agenda.”¹⁰⁶

The objective of the current Canadian approach is “to focus Canada's international efforts primarily on one goal: forging new trade deals and business opportunities in the rapidly expanding markets of Asia and South America.”¹⁰⁷ In other words, the objective was to take advantage of the opportunities in the emergent economies. A confidential government document obtained by CBC News in 2012 revealed the government’s willingness to subordinate human rights and democracy promotion in order to promote economic gains. It noted that, “[t]o succeed we will need to pursue political relationships in tandem with economic interests even where political interests or values may not align.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Michael Hawes and Christopher Kirkey, “Canada in a unipolar world (?): New directions in Canadian foreign policy,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 18.1 (2012): 7.

¹⁰⁴ Kim Mackrael, “Commercial motives driving Canada’s foreign aid, documents reveal,” *The Globe and Mail*, Jan. 08, 2014, accessed July 15, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/commercial-interests-taking-focus-in-canadas-aid-to-developing-world/article16240406/>.

¹⁰⁵ Mark MacKinnon, “How Harper’s foreign policy focus evolved from human rights to the ‘almighty dollar,’” *The Globe and Mail*, Nov. 27, 2013, accessed Nov. 30, 2013, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/how-harpers-foreign-policy-focus-evolved-from-human-rights-to-the-almighty-dollar/article15631389/>

¹⁰⁶ MacKinnon, “How Harper’s foreign policy focus evolved,”

¹⁰⁷ Greg Weston, “Secret document details new Canadian foreign policy,” *CBC News*, Nov 19, 2012, accessed Nov. 30, 2013, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/secret-document-details-new-canadian-foreign-policy-1.1152385>

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Weston, “Secret document details new Canadian foreign policy,”

Related to this, “Canada is increasingly using foreign aid to further its trade interests.”¹⁰⁹ The goal of promoting development for the poor is now explicitly linked to economic gains, a stance which diverges from Canada’s early advocacy of promoting human security—as was done under the Chretien administration and which was promoted by his Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy.¹¹⁰ The majority of the countries proposed as recipients of foreign aid are now chosen in part “because of the commercial benefits they can offer to Canada”, particularly in the extractive sector.¹¹¹ The aforementioned merger of CIDA with the DFAIT follows this logic of putting the promotion of trade and economic interests first.

However, while the government may be putting economics ahead of principles, its rhetoric still incorporates the latter. As one analyst cleverly notes, the recurrence of the “human-rights rhetoric” in the Conservatives’ foreign policy appears in those cases “where there are votes to be won at home and only a tiny amount of trade at risk.”¹¹² The policy towards Cuba of successive governments that will be analyzed in the fourth chapter is evidence of this approach.

3.3 Concluding Observations

Canadian prime ministers possess ample prerogatives to influence foreign policy directions with little constraints. Their personal preferences, style, and ideological orientation along with that of their parties, are factors that must be taken into account in explaining the design of Canadian foreign policy. Under Harper, the neoliberal tenets of his preferred economic approach, his Manichean view of the world, and the need to appeal to some specific constituencies of his party, have resulted in a departure from Canada’s traditional international policy of his predecessors. Notwithstanding the influence that the personal and ideological view of a Prime Minister have in the conduct of Canadian foreign policy, the implementation of those ideas are possible because they reflect in substance also the prevailing interests of the Canadian dominant economic class, of which Harper and his party are loyal representatives.

In this scenario the relations with the hegemonic southern neighbor (i.e., the US) occupies a privileged position. Under Harper, Canada has attempted to improve the overall relations with the US through a closer cooperation in the political and defense contexts, and at

¹⁰⁹ Mackrael, “Commercial motives driving Canada’s foreign aid,”

¹¹⁰ For a detailed explanation of Axworthy’s ideas in foreign policy, see Chapnick, “Diplomatic Counter-Revolution,” 139-140.

¹¹¹ Mackrael, “Commercial motives driving Canada’s foreign aid,”

¹¹² MacKinnon, “How Harper’s foreign policy focus evolved,”

the global level has tried to avoid frictions around conflicting issues that could adversely affect the relationship. The primary goal of this approach is to secure the access of Canadian companies to the US market, particularly in the strategic energy sector and offset the impact of border issues on economic and physical flows between both countries. It is within this framework that Canada's relations with Cuba under the Conservatives must be interpreted.

CHAPTER 4:

CANADIAN-CUBAN RELATIONS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter provides a historical overview of Canadian-Cuban relations adopted by several Canadian government's from the 1960s until the mid-2000s. This chapter will show the main aspects of the evolution of bilateral relations in the last five decades until the period before the election of Harper's Conservative government. In this overview of the historical relationship, only those moments deemed the most relevant to the Canadian-Cuban relationship will be analyzed and contrasted with the always-inescapable US positions. This process will allow for a better comparison in the following chapter of the extent to which the Harper government has distanced itself from the behaviors of all previous Canadian governments. Due to space issues, the research will focus on the most relevant governments: Diefenbaker, Trudeau and Chrétien as they were deemed to have had the closest ties with Cuba and provide the strongest evidence of engagement approach, subsequently labelled "constructive engagement" under Chrétien. Yet, as the discussion below reveals, their association with the island never jeopardized Canada's relations with the US, nor undermined its hegemonic status.

The chapter is organized into two sections. The first is a historical assessment of the Cuban policies of the administrations mentioned above. The second is an overview of scholarly debates about the virtues and limitations of the policy of "constructive engagement".

4.1 Historical Overview of Canada-Cuba Relations

4.1.1 Diefenbaker Period

The government of the Conservative Prime Minister John Diefenbaker is one of the most interesting periods in the Canadian-Cuban relations. His government was compelled to deal with the consequences of the Cuban revolution and the deterioration of Havana's links with the US. In some ways, the patterns adopted by that government marked the Canadian-Cuba relationship for the following decades.

Shortly after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the US-Cuban relations became tense due to the implementation of the agrarian reform and other nationalization measures that affected important American business interests on the island. Washington started to adopt punitive tactics against Havana that would eventually lead to an economic embargo and the termination of diplomatic relations. Simultaneously, the White House pressured the rest

of the countries in the Americas to follow a similar path, only Mexico and Canada did not abide by such demands.

Prime Minister Diefenbaker resisted US pressure to break relations with Cuba and refused to follow US economic embargo.¹¹³ One reason which scholars have given is that he was keen to fill the commercial vacuum after the termination of the US trade links.¹¹⁴ Despite this difference with the US, it must be noted that the PM did not undertake any actions that undermined or threaten US interests in any way. In the design of its Cuban policy, the Diefenbaker Government tried to follow a very balanced line between the position to continue diplomatic and economic relations with Cuba, and the attempt to satisfy some of the primary US concerns. The guidelines of the Canadian stance were established in two statements of the prime minister in December 1960. In Parliament, Diefenbaker expressed very clearly that “Canada reserves the right to trade with any country, including Cuba, and any commodity it so pleases.”¹¹⁵ Some days later, he refined this position when he declared that Canada would restrict the export of equipment or material “of clearly strategic nature” (arms, ammunition, military and related equipment, aircraft engines) to Cuba, while there would be “no limitations” on general trade with Cuba.¹¹⁶

Despite all these statements and the endurance of the myth of Diefenbaker as the nationalist prime minister that faced Washington to maintain Canada’s stance,¹¹⁷ the facts demonstrate that Canada-US strategic alliance was never at stake. The solidness of the North American partnership was proven during the Missile Crisis of October 1962. The prevalent view of those critical moments shows a Diefenbaker who was reluctant and hesitant “about how

¹¹³ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 150.

¹¹⁴ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 150. The potential for this role emerged from the Cuban need to cover the lack of spare parts for industries and transportation that were then mostly of US origin. As Canadian companies had the same technology and standards of US enterprises or were US subsidiaries, they were the natural substitutes for them. See Raúl Rodríguez, “Estados Unidos, Canadá y la Revolución Cubana 1959-1962: convergencias y divergencias en una relación triangular.” (PhD diss., University of Havana, 2013), 77-78. During the 1960s, the main Canadian exports to Cuba were commodities as wheat and wheat flour, skim milk powder, dairy and pure-bred cattle, seed potatoes; and industrial goods as building materials, pipes, metal wiring and cables as well as machinery for agriculture. See Luc Baudouin St-Cyr, “Canadian Policy towards Cuba: A Case Study in US Influence and External Constraints on Canadian Foreign policy” (B.A. Diss., McMaster University, 1987), 49-50.

¹¹⁵ Diefenbaker quoted in Raúl Rodríguez, “Canada and the Cuban Revolution: Defining the Rules of Engagement 1959-1962,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 16 (2010): 70.

¹¹⁶ John Diefenbaker quoted in Rodríguez, “Canada and the Cuban Revolution,” 71.

¹¹⁷ Dennis Molinaro, “‘Calculated Diplomacy’: John Diefenbaker and the Origins of Canada’s Cuba Policy,” in *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era*, ed. Robert Wright and Lana Wylie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 76-77, 91

to deal with the situation, and to what extent Canada had to be involved” after receiving demands from President Kennedy that he support the American position.¹¹⁸ However, despite his concerns, more detailed historical evidence reveals, that in practice, Canada acted as faithful supporter of the US during the crisis as the Canadian Defence Minister, Douglas Harkness, had readied Canada’s air force as well as its navy to go into action on behalf of the Americans.¹¹⁹ This fact demonstrated clearly that although the personal preferences and ideas of a prime minister could influence the foreign policy in diverse paths, that room for manoeuvre is constrained by the demands and the prevailing hierarchy within the international system. “Although Canada was thus the only US ally to take on an active military role during the October crisis, the Prime Minister’s prevarications and the resulting confrontation between Canada and the United States are the main focus of the studies of Canadian reactions to the standoff between the superpowers.”¹²⁰ Another relevant element of the Canadian allegiance to the US and the Western Alliance in the Cuban case is the cooperation over intelligence that Ottawa provided to Washington and other allies from the Canadian embassy in Havana since the beginning of the Cuban Revolution. This cooperation was particularly important during the October Crisis and afterward¹²¹ and only became known recently.

Nonetheless, despite the strategic alliance and ideological empathy between Canada and the US, the Canadian government under Diefenbaker resisted the Washington pressures to end the diplomatic and economic links with Cuba. Canadian perceptions about Cuba were different from those of the US and the Ottawa’s stance was helped somewhat by its non-membership of the Organization of American States (OAS), which was dominated by the US.¹²² The patterns

¹¹⁸ Rodríguez, “Canada and the Cuban Revolution,” 74.

¹¹⁹ “Hours after the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, took to the airwaves on 22 October to disclose the presence of the weapons and to announce his response, Canada’s Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, rose in the House of Commons. In a poorly worded speech, Diefenbaker seemed to question Kennedy’s actions as well as the President’s claim that missiles were being deployed in Cuba. Also, despite the highly integrated nature of the North American defence system, Diefenbaker demurred for several days over whether to put the Canadian military on the same level of readiness as US forces. Unbeknownst to Diefenbaker, who was unwilling to permit Canadian forces to go on alert until 24 October - two days after the US military had requested that this be done – the Canadian Defence Minister, Douglas Harkness, had readied Canada’s air force as well as its navy on 23 October. As Canadian ships patrolled for Soviet submarines in the North Atlantic, Royal Canadian Air Force pilots readied themselves to defend North American airspace. (Peter T. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered*, (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993), quoted in Asa McKercher, “A ‘Half-hearted Response’? Canada and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *The International History Review*, 33.2 (2011): 335–336.)

¹²⁰ McKercher, “A ‘Half-hearted Response’? Canada and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” 336.

¹²¹ Yves Engler, *The black book of Canadian foreign policy* (Vancouver: Fernwood Pub. /Red Pub, 2009), 20.

¹²² Rodríguez, “Estados Unidos, Canadá y la Revolución Cubana 1959-1962,” 126.

established by the Diefenbaker government to a great extent set the essential course of Canada's Cuba policy during the futures decades¹²³ and set the scene for what became known in the 1990s as "constructive engagement".

4.1.2 *Trudeau Period*

In the academic literature about Canada-Cuba relations the predominant view is that the years of the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau (1968-1984) represent the "apex of bilateral relations."¹²⁴ The perceptions about those moments has been influenced by a very well known book written by Robert Wright¹²⁵ that contains detailed information about the antecedents, the developments and the aftermath of the Trudeau's highly publicized visit to Cuba in 1976. This controversial visit to the island, which was the first one by a Western head of government, was the "highwater mark of Trudeau's Cuba policy"¹²⁶ and the "acceptance of the Cuban revolutionary government" became "a litmus test of an independent foreign policy for Canadian governments."¹²⁷

This event was part of the revision of Canadian foreign policy by Trudeau to reverse the "drift towards US dominance."¹²⁸ The Prime Minister's so-called Third Option strategy "that called for the diversification of trade as the key for national independence gave Latin America an important place in the Canadian government's strategic economic thinking."¹²⁹

During the famous visit important documents of cooperation were signed between both countries in different areas. Cuba was included as a recipient of Canadian development assistance programs. The crucial instants of that historic visit were when Trudeau at the end of a speech at the city of Cienfuegos exclaimed: "Viva el pueblo cubano! Viva el primer ministro Fidel Castro! Viva la amistad cubano-canadiense !"¹³⁰

¹²³ Wylie, "Shifting Ground," 59.

¹²⁴ McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 151.

¹²⁵ Robert A. Wright, *Three nights in Havana: Pierre Trudeau, Fidel Castro and the Cold War world* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007)

¹²⁶ McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 151.

¹²⁷ Hal Klepak, "Canada, Cuba, and Latin America: a paradoxical relationship," in *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era*, ed. Robert Wright and Lana Wylie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 29.

¹²⁸ Klepak, "Canada, Cuba, and Latin America," 29.

¹²⁹ Klepak, "Canada, Cuba, and Latin America," 29.

¹³⁰ "Long live the Cuban people! Long live the Prime Minister Fidel Castro! Long live Cuban-Canadian friendship!" Greg Donaghy and Mary Halloran, "Viva el pueblo cubano: Pierre Trudeau's Distant Cuba, 1968– 78," in *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era*, ed. Robert Wright and Lana Wylie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 153.

A cooling in Canada-Cuban relations, however, was witnessed a few years later over differences regarding Cuba's role in the Angola war.¹³¹ Even the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) aid to Cuba was terminated in 1978.¹³² Nonetheless, the personal relationship between Castro and Trudeau, which "was cast as two equals sleeping with the elephant,"¹³³ remained solid over the years and Castro was one of the pallbearers at the Trudeau's funeral in 2000.

However, there are some authors who have a different perspective of Canada's Cuba policy under Trudeau. According to Greg Donaghy and Mary Halloran "despite the unique personal bond that joined Castro and Trudeau, Canada's relations with Cuba were never very special."¹³⁴ The prime minister's advisers in the Department of External Affairs managed the rapprochement with Havana carefully since the beginning.¹³⁵ Following that logic, Trudeau's visit was a "calculated effort" to maintain a "balanced approach" between the Canadian-Cuban relations and the evolution of US-Cuba links, which was regarded as "an effort that became increasingly unmanageable following Cuba's intervention in Africa in 1975."¹³⁶ This fact was portrayed as another chapter in the East-West competition between the US and the Soviet Union for influence in the Third World and the respective allies were constrained to reaffirm their allegiances to the corresponding hegemon. Canada as a part of the Western alliance endorsed the American view and of course was in the opposite side to Cuba in this issue.¹³⁷ This outcome showed once again that loyalties, derived from the membership to a given system of alliances, prevailed over any personal sympathy or dislike of a prime minister.

¹³¹ Suddenly after its independence from Portugal in 1975, Angola was invaded simultaneously by troops of South Africa and Zaire that intended to undermine the socialist oriented government of Agostinho Neto. This aggression counted with the indirect backing of the US. Responding to an international request of support from the Angolan government, Cuba gave its military contribution that was crucial in stopping the invasion and preserving the sovereignty of Angola.

¹³² Robert Wright, "'Northern Ice': Jean Chrétien and the Failure of Constructive Engagement in Cuba," in *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era*, ed. Robert Wright and Lana Wylie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 196.

¹³³ Mark Entwistle, "Canada-Cuba relations: A multiple-personality foreign policy," in *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era*, ed. Robert Wright and Lana Wylie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 296.

¹³⁴ Donaghy and Halloran, "Viva el pueblo cubano," 144, 158.

¹³⁵ Donaghy and Halloran, "Viva el pueblo cubano," 144, 158.

¹³⁶ Donaghy and Halloran, "Viva el pueblo cubano," 144, 158.

¹³⁷ Even though the Cuban presence in Africa was seen as another episode of the East-West conflict, history proved the reductionist perspective of this approach. Fifteen years later, this "interference" was crucial in the independence of Namibia and the end of apartheid. (See, Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting missions: Havana, Washington, Pretoria*. (Alberton, South Africa: Galago, 2002)

Despite the challenges that existed during the period, in the literature on Canadian-Cuban links, the Trudeau era continues to rank high as a symbolic moment in the development of the two nations' bilateral relations.

4.1.3 *Chrétien Period*

The Liberal government of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien (1993-2003) represented a leap forward in the Canada-Cuba relations and probably the most productive stage in the bilateral relations. Under this administration the policy of "constructive engagement" was officially formulated. Lana Wylie characterized "constructive engagement" as entailing a link between cooperation and influence:

While engagement implies regular relations (trade, investment, diplomatic exchanges), "constructive engagement" hopes to engage in these ways in order to achieve change within Cuba's domestic sphere. The goal of constructive engagement is to use the access that comes from regular relations to influence the development of a western style economic and political model on the island ... constructive engagement aspires to do this through fostering connections with Cubans and quietly encouraging the hoped-for changes.¹³⁸

Chrétien promoted this policy based on the belief "that engaging the Cubans was the best way to secure meaningful and enduring political reforms" in the country.¹³⁹ Expanding further on this policy was the Secretary of State Christine Stewart. She explained in 1994 in Havana what the objectives of the Canadian government were with respect to engagement: "First, we are here to promote several concrete Canadian interests, especially in terms of commercial activities. Second, we wish to support positive peaceful change in Cuba, both political and economic."¹⁴⁰ She added that Canada wanted "to encourage Cuba's full constructive participation in international affairs."¹⁴¹ Axworthy elaborated further on the policy: "Our engagement is designed to provide Cuba with the assistance and support that will be needed if a peaceful transition is to occur with full respect for human rights, genuinely representative government institutions and an open economy."¹⁴²

The economic factor was an important variable in the Chrétien government's approach to Cuba in the 1990s. According to James Bartleman, former Canadian ambassador to Cuba, the

¹³⁸ Wylie, "Shifting Ground," 58.

¹³⁹ McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 152.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 165.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 165.

¹⁴² Quoted in McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 165.

Liberal government “hoped that closer ties would prepare the ground for Canadian companies to take advantage of the trade and investment opportunities certain to follow when Cuba eventually adopted a market economy.”¹⁴³ It has been suggested that trade and investment opportunities in Cuba have been “important policy drivers for Canadian policy makers” and “the business community in Canada has been a strong advocate of dialogue and exchange with the Cuban government and people” because it recognizes “that closer political relations hold the key to opening up Cuba’s commercial doors.”¹⁴⁴

Canadian companies with interests on the island, specifically the tourism industry and the giant nickel mining and processing company Sherritt International, were major advocates of closer ties between the two countries.

Facilitating Canada’s economic interests on the island was the fact that after the end of the Cold War, Cuba lost its major economic supporter with the collapse of the Soviet Union. As such, Cuba’s economic relations with Canada became of greater significance to the island’s economic health and this paved the way for closer ties between the Chrétien administration and the government in Havana. Additionally, the identity factor was also important. Chrétien “sought to cultivate warmer relations with Havana” in order to “differentiate himself from Mulroney’s cosy relationship with Washington.”¹⁴⁵ For authors such as Lana Wylie, the most important perception in Canada of bilateral relations with the island is shaped by the “Canadian self-image as a good international citizen, as a peacekeeper, and as distinct from the US.”¹⁴⁶

Further, he wanted to “revitalize what was once a politically popular bilateral relationship under his colleague and former Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau”. In this way, “the Canadian-Cuban relationship took on added significance during the Chrétien years for symbolic, personal, commercial and electoral reasons.”¹⁴⁷

Chrétien’s policy towards Cuba can be seen in two stages, one from 1994 to 1998 and the second from 1998 to 2003. The first period was “especially productive” in the relationship particularly “under the tutelage of foreign affairs minister Lloyd Axworthy.”¹⁴⁸ Canada supported

¹⁴³ Quoted by Wright, “‘Northern Ice’: Jean Chrétien and the Failure of Constructive Engagement,” 197.

¹⁴⁴ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 157-158.

¹⁴⁵ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 152.

¹⁴⁶ Lana Wylie, “Perceptions and foreign policy: A comparative study of Canadian and American policy toward Cuba,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 11 (2004): 42.

¹⁴⁷ Peter McKenna and John M. Kirk, “The Chrétien years: Evaluating ‘constructive engagement,’” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 16 (2010): 82.

¹⁴⁸ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 152.

the proposal to readmit Cuba to the Organization of American States (OAS), and “reopened a modest development assistance program under the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), encouraged connections with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and universities, and promoted business ties.”¹⁴⁹ In ten years, the bilateral trade grew from \$250 million in 1994 to almost \$1 billion in 2003-04.¹⁵⁰ Canada ranked among the most important foreign investors of the island, became a key source of tourists, and signed a 14-Point Joint Declaration with the Cuban government in 1997.¹⁵¹ At the diplomatic level “the Chrétien government consistently opposed the US economic embargo” (while it also criticized Cuba’s human rights record) and denounced the Helms-Burton law.”¹⁵² The particular approach implemented by the Chrétien government towards Cuba started to be known in policy circles as “constructive engagement”, or principled pragmatism.¹⁵³

Undoubtedly, the biggest achievement of Canada’s Cuba policy in this period was the announcement of the signing of the Joint Declaration in 1997. Both governments accepted the document that had been negotiated for months during a visit of the Canadian Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, to Havana. This agreement committed the two countries to a “collaboration in six key areas of political reform in Cuba, including exchanges of judges and parliamentarians, cooperation on strengthening a Cuban citizens’ complaints commission, discussion of human rights, and support for the work of Canadian and Cuban non-governmental organizations (NGOs).”¹⁵⁴ There were also agreements to cooperate in the fields of economic policy, banking, foreign investment, narcotics interdiction, the prevention of international terrorism, health matters, and various cultural, athletic, and academic undertakings.¹⁵⁵

However, the Chrétien Government’s Cuba policy started to decline in the wake of the 1998 visit of the Canadian prime minister to Havana. During his visit, Chrétien tried “to lecture Fidel Castro about human rights and democratic freedoms” and asked for the release of some Cuban dissidents.¹⁵⁶ The lack of a positive response from the Cubans led to a worsening of bilateral relations. In response to Castro’s non-compliance, “Canada strengthened its criticism of Cuba,

¹⁴⁹ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 152.

¹⁵⁰ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 152.

¹⁵¹ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 152.

¹⁵² McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 153.

¹⁵³ McKenna and Kirk, “The Chrétien years,” 82.

¹⁵⁴ Wright, “‘Northern Ice’: Jean Chrétien and the Failure of Constructive Engagement,” 202.

¹⁵⁵ Wright, “‘Northern Ice’: Jean Chrétien and the Failure of Constructive Engagement,” 202.

¹⁵⁶ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 153.

reduced development assistance, discouraged Canadian investment in Cuba, and supported several anti-Cuban U.S. initiatives at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.”¹⁵⁷ Additionally, “efforts to reintegrate Cuba into the OAS were halted” and also “a proposed joint public health project in Haiti was stopped.”¹⁵⁸

In analyzing this period, Mark Entwistle, former Canadian ambassador to Cuba, stated that occasionally, Canada assumes temporarily the “US perspective” on the Cuban issue, and this was the case when Chrétien made human rights the center of his visit to Cuba in 1998; this decision “affected the entire relationship for many years afterwards.”¹⁵⁹ According to Entwistle, the Chrétien approach looked like “it could have been crafted at the US State Department.”¹⁶⁰ He [Chrétien] seemed to have “lost sight of the nature of Canadian policy” and “slipped into the US paradigm of dealing with Cuba.”¹⁶¹

Relations between the two states degenerated further when in March 1999, after a Cuban court tried and condemned “the four dissidents that Chrétien had appealed to Fidel Castro to free”, the prime minister ordered a revision of Canada’s Cuba policy.¹⁶² On June 30th of the same year, Chrétien told reporters that, “although he was not prepared to abandon constructive engagement, ‘we have to put some northern ice in the middle of it.’”¹⁶³

4.2 Assessing the Constructive Engagement Strategy

While Canada had prided itself on its stated policy of “constructive engagement”, particularly as it identified the country as having a policy different from the Americans, there were nevertheless many critics who challenged the claims associated with the strategy.

One of them is, the historian Robert Wright, who “sees the differences in Canadian and American policies as largely superficial.”¹⁶⁴ He argues “that Canadian and American Cuba policies in the 1990s shared the premise that liberal democracies in North America (and elsewhere) ought to be prodding the Cubans forcefully in the direction of liberal reforms.”¹⁶⁵ In Wright’s view, “constructive engagement” was a “hedging policy” because “the policy was always positioned to

¹⁵⁷ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 153.

¹⁵⁸ McKenna and Kirk, “Through Sun and Ice,” 153.

¹⁵⁹ Entwistle, “Canada-Cuba relations,” 289.

¹⁶⁰ Entwistle, “Canada-Cuba relations,” 290.

¹⁶¹ Entwistle, “Canada-Cuba relations,” 290.

¹⁶² Wright, “‘Northern Ice’: Jean Chrétien and the Failure of Constructive Engagement,” 212-213.

¹⁶³ Wright, “‘Northern Ice’: Jean Chrétien and the Failure of Constructive Engagement,” 212-213.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Wright and Lana Wylie, “Introduction,” in *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era*, ed. Robert Wright and Lana Wylie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 21.

¹⁶⁵ Wright and Wylie, “Introduction,” 21.

look mainly towards the future, that is, to a 'post-Castro' future of liberal political and economic reforms."¹⁶⁶ In the end, however, he believed that "[c]onstructive engagement has failed... but engagement has not."¹⁶⁷

Although Kirk and McKenna believe in the policy of "constructive engagement", they stress the important role of the US in the Canada-Cuba relationship as they point out the "'US factor' plays a fundamental role domestically and externally both in Ottawa and Havana in shaping Canada-Cuba relations."¹⁶⁸ Meanwhile, for Entwistle Canada's relationship with Cuba is "a subset of the Canada-US relationship."¹⁶⁹ Canadian-Cuban relations are influenced by a complex "interplay" of "domestic politics and foreign policy". "Sometimes it involves assessment of the impact of Cuba policy on the critical Canada-US relationship" and "sometimes it involves responding to domestic constituencies and interests groups, who have expectations of what Canada should be doing in Cuba." ¹⁷⁰ He believes that "calculated engagement" a term used by Dennis Molinaro is a more appropriate way of defining Canadian foreign policy towards Cuba.¹⁷¹ As he notes, the "Cuba card" has been used in domestic politics to mark the difference with the US to assert Canadian autonomy and "to demonstrate and prove the independence of Canadian foreign policy vis-à-vis the United States, when that is deemed useful or necessary." ¹⁷² Within this historical context "constructive engagement", which is Ottawa's official approach to Cuba since the 1990s, should be seen as functional to the hegemonic agenda. In this policy, Canada (unlike the hegemon) puts into practice a foreign policy that is based on negotiation and cooperation, where the final purpose is the same as that of the dominant power, to promote and protect the system of global capitalism (although using a soft approach) against those states that contest and challenge it.

¹⁶⁶ Wright, "'Northern Ice': Jean Chrétien and the Failure of Constructive Engagement," 216.

¹⁶⁷ Wright, "'Northern Ice': Jean Chrétien and the Failure of Constructive Engagement," 217.

¹⁶⁸ McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 149.

¹⁶⁹ Entwistle, "Canada-Cuba relations," 288.

¹⁷⁰ Entwistle, "Canada-Cuba relations," 297.

¹⁷¹ Entwistle, "Canada-Cuba relations," 293.

¹⁷² Entwistle, "Canada-Cuba relations," 298.

CHAPTER 5:

THE HARPER GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CUBA

The preceding chapter presented an historical overview of Canada Cuba relations. The present chapter constitutes the core of the analysis and addresses the research question posed in the Introduction: that is whether the Harper government's policy toward Cuba represents a radical turning point from the approach of "constructive engagement" implemented by previous governments. The response to that question is that under the Conservatives, Canada's Cuban policy has diverged significantly from the "constructive engagement" strategy of previous administrations.

To demonstrate its claims, this chapter is organized into three sections. In the first, Harper's government policy towards Cuba will be compared with some of the patterns observed historically in relations between the two countries. These patterns include a) the dynamics of the triangular relationship between Canada-US-Cuba), b), the impact of the issues of identity, and c) the influence of economic bilateral interests.

The second section deals with the domestic factors that affect the relationship. It discusses how the influence of Ottawa's foreign policy bureaucracy and the strong focus on the human rights issue in Cuba by the Harper government have adversely affected Canada-Cuba relations. In this context, it also analyses the adverse impact on Canada's Cuban policy of the Conservative offensive against the civil society organizations as the latter had played a very active role in lobbying in favour of engagement with Cuba during previous administrations.

The final section of the chapter summarizes the main ideas that characterize the Harper government's current policy towards Havana.

5.1 Harper's government policy towards Cuba in the context of the historical patterns of the bilateral relationship

5.1.1 The Triangular Relationship: Harper—the US—Cuba

In the previous chapter, it was shown that Canada-Cuba relations are not entirely bilateral but part of a triangle with the US as the third angle as the latter is a critical player for both countries. The dynamics of this triangular relationship implies that for Canada any effort

to forge closer ties with Cuba carries with it the potential for frictions with Washington, while greater condemnation of the island implies loyalty to its southern neighbour. Under any circumstances, the Canadian-US side of the triangle is strategically important.

Since taking office in 2006, the two consecutive terms of Stephen Harper have coexisted with two US Administrations, the last years of the Republican president George W. Bush and the whole cycle of the Democrats president Barack Obama. Some Canadian scholars observe a greater ideological and political affinity between the policies of the Harper government and that of the Bush administration, than between Harper and Bush's successor, Obama.¹⁷³

It is well known that US foreign policy during the Bush years was very assertive in consolidating American hegemony on the world stage. This approach is exemplified in the Bush doctrine, which, according to Charles Krauthammer, was based on unilateralism, the war on terror, the doctrine of pre-emptive war and the American mission to spread democracy throughout the world.¹⁷⁴ Influenced by this context, the US policy towards Cuba during that period was particularly hostile, with the widening and deepening of the policy of political and economic pressures. Academic exchanges, travel, and the flow of remittances to the island were all restricted during the administration of George W. Bush. Moreover, Cuba was also included in the list of enemy countries of the US (those accused of terrorism, of human rights violations, of human trafficking, of having weapon of mass destruction, and of sponsoring of aggressive intelligence actions in US territory, amongst others).¹⁷⁵ During the years of the younger Bush's administration, US-Cuba relations experienced one of the worst periods of this prolonged conflict.. Interestingly, Harper's Cuba policy during his first three years, which coincided with that his Republican counterpart (2006-2008) and with the beginning of the Obama's mandate (2009), was characterized by an unusual anti-Cuban rhetoric that mirrored the rigidities of the US policy towards Cuba.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Paolo Spadoni and Julia Sagebien. "Will They Still Love Us Tomorrow? Canada-Cuba Business Relations and the End of the US Embargo," *Thunderbird International Business Review* 55.1 (2013): 84.

¹⁷⁴ Charles Krauthammer. "Charlie Gibson's Gaffe." *Washington Post*, September 13, 2008, accessed January 30, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/12/AR2008091202457_2.html

¹⁷⁵ See J. M. Sánchez Egozcue, "El Conflicto Cuba/Estados Unidos, Nuevas Realidades Versus Viejas Recetas: Los Límites Del Cambio," *Cahiers Des Amériques Latines* (2008): 61.

¹⁷⁶ John M. Kirk and Peter McKenna, Kirk and McKenna, "Stephen Harper's Cuba Policy," 32.

For example, during this same period, Canada and the US collaborated actively in the exclusion of Cuba from the respective Summits of the Americas,¹⁷⁷ ignoring a growing demand issued by the rest of the Latin American countries that Cuba be invited to participate. During the 5th Summit of the Americas, held in April 2009 in Trinidad and Tobago, Prime Minister Harper expressed his hopes that the Cuban government could reciprocate the new openness of President Obama to Cuba (the latter's policy of easing restrictions on travel for family members as well as members of academic and religious institutions)¹⁷⁸ without referring to the continuity of the US embargo.¹⁷⁹ Three years later the Canadian Prime Minister showed his "unwillingness" to allow Cuba's participation in the Sixth Summit of the Americas held in Colombia in April 2012 and "in any forthcoming summits."¹⁸⁰ As an editorial article in the *National Post* noted, "Stephen Harper stood with President Barack Obama in opposing Cuba's participation in the 2015 Organization of American States summit, for no discernible principled reason whatsoever."¹⁸¹

It should be pointed out that despite some of Obama's early initiatives, which in substance puts the relationship between the US and Cuba on par with the Clinton era, the embargo and the main elements of the isolating and embargoing Cuba continue and, in some instances, the pressures have increased. As Bolender noted, "Obama [has] in fact tightened certain aspects of the embargo, making it harder for Havana to conduct normal international banking transactions, and has increased the amount and frequency of fining international banks that do business with Cuba."¹⁸² Some of those measures have an undeniable extraterritorial character. For instance, the French bank, BNP Paribas, considered one of the largest in Europe,

¹⁷⁷ Lana Wylie, "The Special Case of Cuba," *International Journal: Canada's Journal of Global Policy Analysis* 67.3 (2012): 673.

¹⁷⁸ U.S. The White House, *Fact Sheet: Reaching out to the Cuban People*, Revised. Office of the Press Secretary, April 13, 2009, accessed November 20, 2014, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Fact-Sheet-Reaching-out-to-the-Cuban-people

¹⁷⁹ McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 155.

¹⁸⁰ McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 156.

¹⁸¹ "John Baird has the future of Canada-Cuban relations on his shoulders." *National Post*, February 14, 2013.

¹⁸² Keith Bolender, "Obama's Meeting In Miami: What It All Means." *Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA)*, December 3, 2013, accessed November 20, 2014, <http://www.coha.org/obamas-meeting-in-miami-what-it-all-means/>

reportedly was punished with a “mega-fine” of US\$8.9 billion for violating the blockade.¹⁸³ Also affected by the extra-territorial dimension of the on-going US legislation are Canadian companies and citizens as the Mastercard case illustrates¹⁸⁴ In 2007, a subsidiary of the Bank of America purchased CU Electronic Transaction Services (CUETS), the principal credit card service provider of MasterCard in Canada. CUETS was thus forced to comply with US law, making MasterCards invalid in Cuba and creating a problem for many Canadians who go to Cuba as tourists since they cannot use their MasterCards issued in Canada.¹⁸⁵

However, the Harper government did not seek to counter these actions despite their consequences for Canadians,. Indeed, despite of the fact that there is Canadian legislation (the *Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act*, FEMA)¹⁸⁶ that can counteracts those external interferences,¹⁸⁷ the Harper government chose not to invoke it.

This behavior contrasts with the more active governmental opposition to the US that took place in the 1990s against the implementation of the Helms-Burton Bill. As Deonandan noted, then, Canada denounced the Helms-Burton legislation “as an infringement on national sovereignty, a violation of the rules of the international marketplace and a contravention of the terms of existing trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)” and adopted a series of countervailing measures to protect its businesses.¹⁸⁸ What this demonstrates is that Harper is moving away from the stated goals of liberal

¹⁸³ “On Resolution 68/8 of the United Nations General Assembly entitled ‘Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States of America against Cuba’”, *Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de la República de Cuba*, Julio 2014, <http://www.cubavsbloqueo.cu/>

¹⁸⁴ See, Lana Wylie, *Reassessing Canada's Relationship with Cuba in an Era of Change* (Toronto, Ont: Canadian International Council, 2010), 15. Additionally, several Canadian banks have also yielded to US pressure by rejecting business and closing accounts with clients involved in business with Cuba. See Kirk and McKenna, “Stephen Harper's Cuba Policy”, 29.

¹⁸⁵ Wylie, *Reassessing Canada's Relationship with Cuba*.”

¹⁸⁶ Deonandan, “The Helms Burton Bill and Canada’s Cuba Policy,” 127.

¹⁸⁷ Kirk and McKenna, “Stephen Harper's Cuba Policy”, 28.

¹⁸⁸ The Canadian government also resorted to countervailing legislation arguing that protective legislation should be on the books in case the lawsuit provisions take effect in the future. To this end, Ottawa also incorporated amendments to the already mentioned 1985 Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act (FEMA). That decision would permit Canadian companies to counter-sue in Canadian courts to recover damages awarded by US court rulings, as well as to recoup legal costs incurred in both countries. Given that many American companies have assets in Canada, they would thus be vulnerable to such retaliatory measures. Those amendments would allow also the Attorney General to bar Canadian courts from enforcing judgments emanating from US jurisdictions against Canadian defendants. The legal measures also include fines of up to C\$1.5m on Canadian companies, or Canadian-based US subsidiaries, which comply with Helms-Burton. See Deonandan, “The Helms-Burton Bill and Canada's Cuba Policy,” 126-127.

internationalism. “Although there are still fragments of liberal internationalism in Harper’s foreign policy” mainly related to the negotiation of trade agreements and the promotion of other rights, the current Conservative government refuses to follow the traditional engagement of previous Canadian administrations which all claimed to adhere to the “middle power” approach.¹⁸⁹ In the case of Cuba, that policy did not bring the expected results of regime transformation through soft means. Consequently, it seems to have lost its usefulness under Harper as the peculiar Canadian contribution to the consolidation and stability of the capitalist hegemonic order.

The Harper government’s response to this perceived ineffectiveness of liberal internationalism is to explore alternative ways for Canada to assert itself on the world stage in support of the global capitalist order led by the US. It aspires to increase and reinforce the role of Canada through a more active participation in the security endeavours sponsored by its southern neighbor.¹⁹⁰ As the engagement of Cuba, constructively or not, belongs more to the “liberal internationalist” era that the Harper government wishes to undermine,¹⁹¹ it does not fit well with its current foreign policy agenda. This attitude precludes Ottawa from moving beyond Washington’s paralysis regarding Cuba, and the result is neglect, inertia and a non-declared disengagement from the island.

Alternatively, pursuing a policy of actively subverting Cuba is not an attractive option for Ottawa either. If the US, with its considerably larger economic, military and intelligence resources has failed to transform Cuba after almost six decades of isolation, the prospects of Canadian success are slim. Besides, the domestic gains of such behavior are not perceptible, something that is crucial in the Harper government calculations through the performance of its foreign policy objectives. Therefore, the aggressive rhetoric pursued by Ottawa towards

¹⁸⁹ Roland Paris, “Are Canadians still liberal internationalists?” *OpenCanada.org*, September 25, 2014, accessed October 6, 2014, <http://opencanada.org/features/the-think-tank/comments/are-canadians-still-liberal-internationalists/>

¹⁹⁰ Although the Conservative government shows more assertiveness, critics wonder about the gap between rhetoric and real capabilities in international affairs. See Roland Paris, “Harper’s Heroic Ukraine Message Does Not Reflect Reality,” *CIPS Blog* June 3, 2014, accessed November 18, 2014, <http://cips.uottawa.ca/harpers-heroic-ukraine-message-does-not-reflect-reality/> and Wesley Wark, “Where’s the Megaphone on the Threat to Canada?” *CIPS Blog* September 7, 2014, accessed November 18, 2014, <http://cips.uottawa.ca/wheres-the-megaphone-on-the-threat-to-canada/>

¹⁹¹ “Harper and his colleagues seem to regard the principles of liberal internationalism as more Liberal than liberal—that is, as a hallmark of the Liberal Party of Canada—even though they provided a largely non-partisan basis for foreign policy over the preceding 60 years.” See Paris, “Are Canadians still liberal internationalists?”

Havana, particularly during the first four years of the Conservative administration, and sporadically in later years, seems more designed to demonstrate loyalty to the US than to pursue an explicit political goal of Canadian foreign policy towards the Caribbean country.

5.1.2 The Declining Importance of a Canadian Identity under Harper

Historically, one of the major factors that have influenced Canada-Cuba relations has been the desire by successive Canadian administrations to carve out an identity distinct from that of the US. However, under Harper, this desire seems to have waned as his government seeks to follow more closely in the America footsteps. Not only is Canada-Cuba relations influenced by the Harper government's desire to follow more closely in the American path, but as was discussed in chapter three, it is also affected by Canada's sense of identity and self-image. According to Lana Wylie "[t]he most prominent perception in Canada of Cuba and Canadian-Cuban relations is influenced by the Canadian self-image as a good international citizen, as a peacekeeper, and as distinct from the US."¹⁹² Some Canadian administrations, aware of this prevailing perception in Canadian society, have used the "Cuba card" to demonstrate Ottawa's independence or autonomy from Washington in foreign policy.¹⁹³ Thus, Canadian politicians have exploited "for reasons of domestic political consumption" this demonstration of independence - "real and imagined" - from the US to reaffirm the Canadian "sense of pride and national identity."¹⁹⁴

However, under the Conservative government this tendency has lost ground. This new trend was seen most recently in the Harper government's response or lack thereof, to President Obama's announcement on easing of some of the restrictions on Cuba. Thus far, the Canadian government has shown little enthusiasm about this announcement —something one would expect if "constructive engagement" were indeed its goal. When Stephen Harper was asked about Canada's role in bringing about this softening, he seemed to want to downplay Canada's actions. He stated, "I don't want to exaggerate Canada's role, we facilitated places where the two countries could have a dialogue and explore ways of normalizing the relationship. And that is what we did... We were not in any way trying to direct or mediate the talks. We were just

¹⁹² Wylie, "Perceptions and foreign policy," 42.

¹⁹³ Entwistle, "Canada-Cuba relations," 298.

¹⁹⁴ McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 158.

trying to make sure they had the opportunity to have the kind of dialogue they needed to have."

¹⁹⁵ The future implications of Obama's announcements for Canada-Cuba will be discussed in greater detail in the epilogue.

As it was discussed above, the Harper government has not only distanced Canada from the "international good citizen" image projected by the middle power thesis, but he also wants to transform the paradigm through which Canadian foreign policy has been perceived.¹⁹⁶ Additionally, his government does not seem as concerned with underlining the distinctiveness of Canada with respect to the US. On the contrary, one of the top priorities of the current administration is to establish even closer economic, political and security links with Washington. In this context, the "constructive engagement" strategy of playing the "Cuba card" is not attractive at all and is rather an obstacle in the quest for a deeper alliance with the US.

Furthermore, it is well known that one of the main priorities of the Harper government is to achieve the necessary support within the US to get the approval for the conclusion of the last part of the Keystone XL pipeline. This project has been paralyzed for six years due to the pressures of ecological organizations and activists, the opposition of some governors and politicians (most of them from the Democratic Party) and the reticence of President Obama.¹⁹⁷ Canadian-US diplomacy during the last few years has been marked by constant attempts to convince the US President to change his mind on this issue. Canada's Cuba strategy can be seen as part of a larger campaign to court the US President, and to influence him on the pipeline issue. The linkage between Canadian interests, US policy, and the Cuban issue was clearly identified by a columnist of the *National Post* during the assessment of Harper-Obama cooperation to exclude Cuba from the Summit of the Americas in Cartagena:

¹⁹⁵ Stephen Harper quoted in, "US-Cuba rapprochement 'overdue': Canadian PM." *Agence France-Presse (AFP)*, December 17, 2014, accessed on Dec. 19, 2014, <http://news.yahoo.com/canada-cheers-us-cuba-rapprochement-201940175.html>

¹⁹⁶ Paris, "Are Canadians still liberal internationalists?"

¹⁹⁷ Les Whittington, "Keystone pipeline delays symbolic of strained Canada-U.S. relations." *Toronto Star*, Nov 21, 2014, accessed Nov. 29, 2014, http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2014/11/21/keystone_pipeline_delays_symbolic_of_strained_canadaus_relations.html

In siding with the president on the issue of Cuba, Mr. Harper helped guide events that were already trending in Ottawa's favour. There was little to be gained from isolating the president, and much to be achieved by gaining Mr. Obama's appreciation.¹⁹⁸

However, the Keystone XL pipeline project enjoys the sympathy of the Republican caucuses in both houses of the Congress to the point that the victory of that party in the US mid-term elections on November 2014 was considered as a factor that would help Ottawa to accomplish its goals with respect to the controversial pipeline.¹⁹⁹ In fact, a bill approving Keystone XL passed on February 11th 2015,²⁰⁰ although President Obama vetoed it a few days later.²⁰¹

Coincidentally, it is within the Republican legislators that the policy of isolating and embargoing Cuba can count on overwhelming support. Particularly significant is the clout that the group of Cuban-American Senators and Representatives can exert in the Congress.²⁰² As such, the Harper government cannot risk a weakening of the Republican support at any level of the US political spectrum if it desires to accomplish its strategic objectives. Therefore, any rapprochement between Ottawa and Havana could entail undesirable consequences for the Conservative government's plans in the US on crucial issues such as Keystone XL. That is another reason the "constructive engagement" strategy in playing the "Cuba card" is no longer viewed with any enthusiasm by Harper's camp.

¹⁹⁸ Kelly McParland, "Stephen Harper's Cuba position is a study in realpolitik," *National Post*, April 17, 2012, accessed Nov. 27, 2014, <http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2012/04/17/kelly-mcparland-stephen-harpers-cuba-position-is-a-study-in-realpolitik/>

¹⁹⁹ Alexander Panetta, "U.S. Midterm Elections: Canadian Oil Among Industries Affected North Of Border," *The Huffington Post*, November 11, 2014, accessed Nov. 27, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/11/05/us-midterm-elections-canada-canadian_n_6105268.html

²⁰⁰ Timothy Gardner, "Congress passes Keystone XL bill, Obama expected to veto," *Reuters*, February 11, 2015, accessed February 15, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/11/us-usa-keystone-house-idUSKBN0LF2L420150211>

²⁰¹ Lederman, "Defying GOP, Obama vetoes Keystone XL pipeline bill,"

²⁰² In 2011, Mario Diaz-Balart, a Cuban-American Republican member of the House of Representative from Florida, issued a criticism against Obama for the delay in the approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline. The statement was made in his capacity as founder and chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Conference, a caucus of Hispanic Republican congressmen. See "Congressional Hispanic Conference Blasts Obama for Holding Jobs Hostage," *Congressional Hispanic Conference*, Dec 8, 2011, accessed Nov. 27, 2014, <http://hispanicconference-mariodiazbalart.house.gov/press-release/congressional-hispanic-conference-blasts-obama-holding-jobs-hostage>

Further, Canada, unlike the US, does not have a Cuban constituency that could influence Ottawa's Cuban policy. However, the Cuban-American lobby and the political ramifications stemming from their actions have in some ways an indirect effect on Canadian foreign policy. The results of their lobbying in the US are influencing the current Canadian government's stance towards the island. This fact is another confirmation of the triangular character of the relationship that was discussed above.

In sum, , it can be said that the current long-term strategic purposes of Canadian business class that Harper so well interprets and represents, are in conflict with a strategy of improved Canadian-Cuban relations.

5.1.3 The Influence of Economic Bilateral Interests in Canada-Cuba Relations

Influencing Harper's Cuba policy is the fact that Canada's economic interests in Cuba have declined over the last decade. Traditionally, economic factors have been considered one of the driving forces in Canadian-Cuban relations. Previously, promoting Canadian business interests and seizing spaces left by the US companies on the island used to be priorities in Ottawa's Cuba policy. Currently, however, while Canadian investment presence on the island is important to Cuba, it has been in relative decline and the companies still active there have relatively little clout politically or economically within Canada. Most of them are individual investors or small-medium firms trying to seize profits in a high-risk market. The only exception, Sherritt International, which is also the main corporate foreign investor in Cuba and which constitutes a very important provider for the island in terms of energy production (gas, oil and electricity generation) and exports. Even it is not a major and highly influential corporation in the Canadian context because it ranks a lowly 488th amongst Canada's top 500 corporations.²⁰³ Besides, the enterprise has been experiencing economic difficulties in the last few years due to increased investment losses and growing debts derived from investments

²⁰³ "FP500: 2014," *Financial Post*, accessed on October 28, 2014, <http://www.financialpost.com/news/fp500/2014/index.html?page=10>

depreciation and higher income taxes.²⁰⁴ Hence, there are few Canadian companies with interests in Cuba with the capacity to influence Ottawa's decisions regarding the island.

Where Canada is putting its focus, apart from the ongoing emphasis on traditional Western partners, is in the emerging economies of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa),²⁰⁵ countries which all have considerable consumer markets and which offer enormous opportunities for investments. The Harper government is pursuing economic ties with these states even though politically and ideologically these countries may have political systems or espouse political practices that are antithetical to those of the Conservative government.

For its part, even though Cuba has been opening up its economy since the 1990s due to a variety of pressures that it is facing, it still does not fit into the categories of countries with an investment environment to which large investors would be attracted. Since the 1990s, Cuba has been compelled, in large part due to the fall of the Soviet Union, its major ally and source of aid, to open its economy to the influence of market forces. However, this opening is taking place under very strict control by the government. Decisions on whether to accept or reject a particular investment is based on whether the investment represents a real contribution to the country's economy and whether it bring benefits to the population according to the norms of a socialist system. The process of economic liberalization has been very gradual as investments are rigorously evaluated for their adherence to the above criteria on a case by case basis.

Recently, the Cuban government introduced a new Investment Law that aims to be more flexible to attract increasing foreign investments.²⁰⁶ However, the new legislation still maintains, in substance, the concerns on the social and political priorities of the island and it is still far away from a neoliberal approach so prevalent in Latin America and so damaging to

²⁰⁴ "Sherritt to shed 25% of work force at Toronto head office," *The Globe and Mail*, Oct. 29, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/sherritt-to-shed-25-of-workforce-at-toronto-head-office/article21361768/>

²⁰⁵ "Global Markets Action Plan. The Blueprint for Creating Jobs and Opportunities for Canadians through Trade," *Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada*, November 27, 2013, <http://international.gc.ca/global-markets-marches-mondiaux/plan.aspx?lang=eng>. The plan included Russia initially as a priority market, but it was cancelled after the policy of sanctions.

²⁰⁶ "Cuba pone en vigor nueva Ley de Inversión Extranjera," *El Financiero*, June 28, 2014, accessed Nov. 27, 2014, <http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/mundo/ley-de-inversion-extranjera-entra-en-vigor-en-cuba.html>

many countries which have implemented its prescriptions.²⁰⁷ Indeed, the new Cuban investment approach will not accept the recent practices of Canadian companies in the area that privilege the investor rights over the populations' interests, thus is highly improbable that the Harper government will support the Canadian economic engagement in the island actively under those conditions.

Another factor explaining Harper's detachment from Cuba has to do with tensions stemming from the case of two Canadian businessmen prosecuted in Cuba on charges of corruption (bribery, tax evasion and "activities damaging to the economy").²⁰⁸ The case started in 2011 and has been drawn out and protracted due to the peculiar functioning of Cuba's justice system that has been criticized for its lack of transparency.²⁰⁹ Though the conflict has been managed discretely at the diplomatic level, it has contributed to the deterioration of the investment confidence among Canadian entrepreneurs and provides Ottawa with further justification not to engage more decisively with Cuba on economic matters.

5.2 Domestic Factors Influencing Canada's Cuban Policy under Harper

5.2.1 The Focus on the Human Rights Issue

One distinctive aspect of the Conservative Administration toward Cuba has been the "critical tone" on the issue of human rights and democracy.²¹⁰ Some scholars have noticed this has been the main reason of "acrimony" between Canada and Cuba in recent years.²¹¹ According to these views, the current government "has allowed the issue of human rights to dominate the bilateral relationship with Cuba" due to the ideological orientations of the Conservative party and its chief officials in Ottawa.²¹² Thus, the Canada-Cuba relations have

²⁰⁷ Ángel Guerra Cabrera, "El socialismo cubano y la inversión extranjera," *Cubadebate*, April 10, 2014, accessed Nov. 27, 2014, <http://www.cubadebate.cu/opinion/2014/04/10/el-socialismo-cubano-y-la-inversion-extranjeraii/#.VHeW6DYtAb0>

²⁰⁸ Julian Sher, "Canadian entrepreneur who blew whistle on Cuban corruption faces 12-year term," *Toronto Star*, May 15, 2013, accessed on September 27, 2013, http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/05/15/canadian_entrepreneur_who_blew_whistle_on_cuban_corruption_faces_12year_term.html

²⁰⁹ Daniel Trotta, "CEO's bribery gifts to Cubans end in 15-year jail sentence," *The Globe and Mail*, October 03, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/ceos-bribery-gifts-to-cubans-end-in-15-year-jail-sentence/article20929352/>, accessed Nov. 27, 2014,

²¹⁰ Wylie, "The Special Case of Cuba," 679.

²¹¹ Kirk and McKenna, "Stephen Harper's Cuba Policy," 29 and Thomas Legler and Stephen Baranyi, "El largo compromiso de Canadá con Cuba: paradojas y posibilidades," *América Latina Hoy* 52 (2010): 137.

²¹² Kirk and McKenna, "Stephen Harper's Cuba Policy," 31.

become “hostage to a single issue area”.²¹³ In previous governments, the question of human rights was also present and part of the negotiations, but this government has made it the “centrepiece” of the bilateral relations.²¹⁴

Some examples of the primacy accorded human rights in the Canada’s policy towards Cuba were expressed through several statements made by Harper and other high-level officials on different occasions, particularly during the initial years of the Conservative administration. In January 2009 before his visit to Cuba Peter Kent, Minister of State of Foreign Affairs for the Americas, made provocative statements saying Cuba was a “dictatorship, any way you package it.”²¹⁵ On April 2009, Kent expressed “encouragement of the release of political prisoners and the opening of institutions to democratic practices”.²¹⁶ Harper himself has castigated Cuba particularly in occasion of the different Summit of the Americas and during international visits to other Latin American and Caribbean countries.²¹⁷ The double standards implicit in pursuing of the human rights issue regarding Cuba by the Conservatives are very clear. As was mentioned in chapter two, the current Canadian government reserves the lecturing on human rights for those countries, like Cuba, where there are not fundamental economic interests, while it is careful not to lecture nations that represent valuable markets and investment opportunities, but which nevertheless are human rights violators such as China and Colombia. However, Harper can rationalize his government’s ties with Colombia on the basis that this a democratically elected government, despite the country’s human right records.

5.2.2 Bureaucratic Preferences

The Canadian bureaucracy has also played a role in shaping the government’s strategy towards Cuba. As Kirk and McKenna wrote, “the traditional, conservative approach toward Cuba by officials within the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)” has also played into the government’s preferences with respect to Cuba.²¹⁸ These officials “have never been fond of cultivating closer relations with Cuba” and “have been in a strong position

²¹³ Kirk and McKenna, “Stephen Harper’s Cuba Policy,” 32.

²¹⁴ Kirk and McKenna, “Stephen Harper’s Cuba Policy,” 32.

²¹⁵ Wylie, “Shifting Ground,” 59.

²¹⁶ Heather N. Nicol, “Canada-Cuba relations: An ambivalent media and policy,” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 16.1 (2010): 114).

²¹⁷ Kirk and McKenna, “Stephen Harper’s Cuba Policy,” 32.

²¹⁸ Kirk and McKenna, “Stephen Harper’s Cuba Policy,” 32.

to influence Canada's Cuba policy."²¹⁹ The outcome of this situation is an "ideological preference for a tougher line on Cuba, deeply rooted deference to Washington, and a bureaucratic preference for doing little on the file."²²⁰ Indeed, the inertia of the bureaucracy's preferences prevails when there is not a clear political will to lead in a concrete direction. Other authors point out that the frustration of high-level officials with the lack of changes in Cuba, the desire to please Washington and the convergence of the approach of the bureaucracy with the ideological orientation of the Harper government is what explain the changes—the move away from "constructive engagement" Canada's Cuban policy.²²¹

5.2.3 *The Decline of 'Counter-Consensus Organizations*

Another factor that arguably has influenced Canada-Cuba relations deals with the decline of civil society organizations, precisely those groups, which Pratt has labelled "counter consensus." As was discussed earlier, the Harper government has been involved in a deliberate offensive against civil society organizations such as NGOs and other institutions with a progressive orientation²²² that are critical of his administration's policies. Many of these organizations were advocates of a stronger Canada-Cuban relationship. As Christine Warren explains, during the years of Lloyd Axworthy as Foreign Affairs minister, relations with Cuba were more amicable as they benefitted from the involvement of many civil society groups, scholars, universities and think tanks that were connected to his office.²²³ These groups included, among others, the United Church of Canada, the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, Oxfam Canada, Ottawa-Cuba Connection, Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO), and the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice. Canada's Cuban policy in the 1990s was influenced by the interest of many of these organizations in a closer relationship with Cuba.²²⁴ Their activism, for example, led to social mobilization across Canada against the Helms-Burton Bill, and they exerted an undeniable impact on the implementation of Canadian legislation (Foreign Extraterritorial Measures Act--FEMA) to counter that intrusive US initiative.

²¹⁹ Kirk and McKenna, "Stephen Harper's Cuba Policy," 32.

²²⁰ Kirk and McKenna, "Stephen Harper's Cuba Policy," 32.

²²¹ Legler and Baranyi, "El largo compromiso de Canadá con Cuba," 137.

²²² Chapnick, "Diplomatic Counter-Revolution," 149.

²²³ Cristina Warren, *Canada's policy of constructive engagement with Cuba: past, present and future* (Ottawa: FOCAL, 2003), 6.

²²⁴ Warren, *Canada's policy of constructive engagement with Cuba*, 5.

Although the influence of these organizations lost some ground after Axworthy departed from the Department Foreign Affairs Department in 2000, the Harper government has been aggressively focused on cancelling any vestige of the Axworthy legacy in Canadian foreign policy since it took power.²²⁵ Without doubt, the heyday of Canada-Cuba relations was during the Axworthy era.

5.3 Concluding Observations

Despite the less than amicable nature of the Canada-Cuba relations under Harper, since 2011 there has been a less contentious tone in the relationship. Two high-level Canadian officials, Diane Ablonczy, foreign minister for the Americas²²⁶ and Foreign Minister, John Baird,²²⁷ visited the island in 2011 and 2013 respectively. Both visits took place in an atmosphere of dialogue without lecturing. However, this climate was contrasted by Harper's negative remarks towards Havana in the context of the Summit of the Americas.²²⁸

This apparent shift is not related to a substantial change of policy towards Cuba, but it is more linked to what some authors have noticed as an adjustment in Canadian foreign policy after the initial years of the Conservative government with more emphasis on the promotion of trade and investment interests abroad than on democracy and human rights promotion.²²⁹ This less "ideological" period of the Conservative administration has not implied a perceived improvement in the relations with Havana either. Since Cuba is not an important economic target for Ottawa and since the island is a very sensitive issue on the political landscape of the US, the preferred outcome from the Canadian perspective is the neglect of the relationship.

²²⁵ Chapnick, "Diplomatic Counter-Revolution," 142. Although this scholar recognizes that Axworthy's influence started to be erased gradually by his Liberal successors.

²²⁶ Wylie, "The Special Case of Cuba," 679.

²²⁷ Stephen Wicary, "A business-friendly Cuba gets a hand from Canada," *The Globe and Mail*, August 19, 2013, accessed September 18, 2013, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/rob-magazine/a-business-friendly-cuba-gets-a-hand-from-canada/article14006239/?page=all> and Tim Harper, "Harper Conservatives discover Latin America in time for historic transition," *Toronto Star*, February 22, 2013, accessed March 4, 2014, http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/02/22/harper_conservatives_discover_latin_america_in_time_for_historic_transition_tim_harper.html

²²⁸ See McKenna and Kirk, "Through Sun and Ice," 156.

²²⁹ See MacKinnon, "How Harper's foreign policy focus evolved,"

This chapter demonstrated the ways in which the Harper government's policy towards Cuba differed from that of previous administrations; it represented a shift away from the idea of "constructive engagement". To illustrate the differences, three patterns in the relationship were analyzed: the dynamics of the triangular relationship Canada-US-Cuba, the issue of a distinct Canadian identity from that of the Americans, and the influence of economic bilateral interests. When measured against the previously common patterns that defined Canadian foreign policy towards Havana in earlier decades during the past fifty years, the Harper government shows a significant departure from the stance of previous administrations in almost all areas. This chapter has tried to explain the motivations for this shift.

An overarching trend witnessed under Harper, is that the search for a closer alliance with the US in political, economic and security terms, in order to safeguard vital Canadian interests, has predominated over any other consideration. In this context, the relations with Cuba have been affected negatively. Relatedly, the chapter has demonstrated that in practice the Harper government has distanced itself and Canada from the substance of the policy of "constructive engagement". This outcome is also a consequence of the fact that "constructive engagement" belongs more to the "middle power" approach through which Canada has been perceived traditionally to perform its foreign policy.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Ottawa's Cuba policy has been an important aspect of Canadian foreign policy in the last five decades. This research has tried to analyze whether this continues to be the case under Harper's government or whether the latter represents a radical turning point from the approach of "constructive engagement", which had been implemented by previous governments. This thesis holds that under the Conservatives led by Prime Minister Harper, Canada's Cuban policy has evolved significantly different from preceding administrations.

The predominant view of Canadian foreign policy after the end of WWII is that of a "middle power" playing a constructive and pacifistic role on the world stage, supporting international institutions and performing its foreign policy through quiet diplomacy. This archetype is the prevalent image through which other countries and Canadians themselves perceive the country's behavior at the world stage. However, as noted in the first chapter, the substance of such a model is that Canada became a "core state" of the international system in the context of an "American-led hegemonic order" where it has acted as "facilitator and mediator" to help to defuse potential conflicts that could undermine the stability of the global order.²³⁰

The "constructive engagement" that was adopted in the 1990s as the official Canadian policy towards Cuba should be seen as functional to the hegemonic agenda. According to this strategy, Canada (unlike the hegemon) puts into practice a foreign policy based on negotiation and cooperation, where the final purpose is the same as that of the dominant power, to promote and protect the system of global capitalism (although using a soft approach) against those states (in this case Cuba) that contest and challenge it.

Nonetheless, under Harper the orientation of Canadian foreign policy in general, and consequently of Canada's Cuba policy have evolved towards a different path. There is a combination of external (systemic) and domestic factors that explain this. Firstly, on one hand, as was discussed in chapter two, the international situation after the developments of September

²³⁰ Neufeld, "Hegemony and Foreign Policy Analysis," 99.

11, 2001 led to a feeling of shared vulnerability among developed capitalist countries and thus there was an instinctive need to close ranks with the hegemon and leading security guarantor. In addition, the salience of new non-liberal emergent powers in the last decade (BRICS) have spurred a deeper subordination to Washington because what is at stake is the survival of the long established Western dominance over the international economics and politics. This trend is not only perceptible in Canada, but also in other developed states such as the European Union, Australia, and Japan.

On the other hand, even though the hegemonic system sets the place, the role and the limits of capitalist country within it according to its relative power, there is some space for human agency. In this case study, it was seen how the actions, ideology and political preferences of relevant politicians, and particularly of prime ministers or foreign ministers, can turn the course of Canadian foreign policy in diverse directions provided that certain boundaries imposed by the imperatives and strategic needs of the international system are not trespassed.

In the case of the Harper government, the preference for a neoliberal economic approach and the need to appeal to some specific constituencies of his party have led in a rightist international stance that has openly departed from those of his predecessors. The implementation of these ideas in the country's foreign policy is possible because they also reflect in substance of the preferences of the Canadian dominant class, of which Harper and his party are loyal representatives.

Consequently, under the leadership of Prime Minister Harper Canada has attempted to improve its overall relations with the US through closer cooperation in the political and defense contexts at the international level, and to avoid frictions on conflicting issues that could affect the relationship. The primary goal of this approach is to secure the access of Canadian companies to the US market, particularly in the strategic energy sector and offset the impact of border issues on economic and physical flows between both countries.

In defining the profile of Canadian foreign policy towards Cuba under Harper the analysis of historical patterns of this relationship discussed in chapter three (the influence of economic bilateral interests, the dynamics of the triangular relationship Canada-US-Cuba, and the impact of the topic of identity) were especially helpful. When tested against these patterns

the Harper administration showed a significant departure from the stance of previous governments regarding Cuba.

Cuba's "constructive engagement" policy belongs more to the period of the so-called middle power model of Canadian foreign policy, where Ottawa preferred to follow a more diplomatic strategy to achieve the same long-term objectives as the US-- the reinsertion of Cuba as a liberal democracy into the world capitalist system. This is why the Harper administration (that is focused on shifting paradigms) seems not particularly interested in "constructive engagement" even though the policy has not been abandoned officially.

The combination of this rationale with the incidence of the economic, identity, US influence and agency factors analyzed above create the conditions for Cuba not to be a relevant priority in today's Canadian foreign policy, which seems driven by inertia and neglect regarding the Caribbean country. To conclude, this thesis remarks that the substance of the actions of the Conservative government towards Cuba until now indicate a practical disengagement even though it is not recognized explicitly.

6.1 EPILOGUE

On December 17, 2014, US President Barack Obama, and Cuban President Raul Castro surprised the world with parallel announcements of policy changes intended to improve US-Cuban relations. Diplomatic ties with the opening by each country of embassies in the other and the easing of travel and commerce restrictions were among the main aspects of the statements.²³¹ This development has created high expectations about the future of bilateral relations between the two countries; however, many obstacles still remain. Among them, the lasting US embargo on Cuba, the lifting of which depends on the US Congress which is dominated by the Republicans who mostly oppose this presidential initiative to foster closer ties with the island.

One of the most surprising aspects of these new developments is related to the role played by Canada; it was one of the locations of the secret negotiations between Cuba and the

²³¹ Tavia Grant, "After 53 years, a historic shift in U.S.-Cuba relations," *The Globe and Mail*, Dec. 17, 2014, accessed Dec. 17 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/cuba-us-take-steps-to-normalize-relations/article22114565/>

US. This fact is interesting due to the frosty relations between Ottawa and Havana during the last eight years. However, although some press analyses have tried to highlight the protagonist role of Canada in this process,²³² as was discussed above, Prime Minister Harper downplayed Canada's role in the process, stating that Canada only provided the place and for the conversation at the requests of the US and Cuba without mediating or taking part in the dialogue.²³³ Harper himself, in an interview with CBC,²³⁴ seemed to go out of his way to portray a distant and low profile role for Canada in this transformative event, seeming to confirm his ideological prejudices towards Cuba and his desire not to rile those in the politicians in the US who oppose the President's move.

The preliminary conclusion of all this is that the arguments made in this investigation regarding Canadian foreign policy towards Cuba under Harper maintain their validity, despite the new US-Cuban developments. Deeper and wider changes in US-Cuban ties are some distance away as they are dependent on Congress, which will soon be in the throes of a new election. The outcome of this contest will have implications for the future relations between the two, and also for Canada-Cuban relations. This new scenario will create both opportunities and challenges for Canada, particularly in the economic field as Entwistle noted,²³⁵ but an analysis of this future context is beyond the scope and the original purposes of this research.

²³² Lee Berthiaume, "Canada credited for helping broker U.S.-Cuba thaw," *Ottawa Citizen*, December 17, 2014, accessed on Dec. 17 2014, <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/politics/harper-hopes-fresh-start-in-u-s-cuba-relations-will-lead-to-changes-on-island-nation>

²³³ Stephen Harper quoted in, "US-Cuba rapprochement 'overdue': Canadian PM."

²³⁴See "Full text of Peter Mansbridge's interview with Stephen Harper," *CBC News*, Dec 17, 2014, accessed Feb 04, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/full-text-of-peter-mansbridge-s-interview-with-stephen-harper-1.2876934>

²³⁵ Peter Kuitenbrouwer, "Canadians suddenly racing not to squander head start in Cuba," *Financial Post*, January 30, 2015, accessed February 08, 2015, <http://business.financialpost.com/2015/01/30/canadians-suddenly-racing-not-to-squander-head-start-in-cuba/>

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